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Alligances

ThunderClan

Leader
Wishstar - a tall orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with yellow eyes

Deputy
Applebrook - a stocky cream fluffy tom with white paws and amber eyes

Medicine Cat
Coldheart - a black fluffy tom with blue eyes
Moonwater - a dark grey tabby she-cat with dark purplish-blue eyes

Warriors
Kindpetal - a golden tabby she-cat with brown eyes
Ravenclaw - a large fluffy black tom with hazel eyes and long whiskers
Apprentice, Cardinalpaw
Whiteleaf - a white she-cat with green eyes and a large, fluffy tail
Apprentice, Springpaw
Sparrowscar - a large reddish-brown solid tom with blue eyes. Heavily scared on one side of his body
Tanglestripe - a brown tabby tom with orange eyes and a torn right ear
Pineclaw - a golden and black tabby tortoiseshell tom with green eyes
Swallowtail - a brown speckled she-cat with a white belly, front paws, chest, and lemon colored eyes.
Smokefoot - a dark grey tabby tom with darker grey paws and dark orange eyes
Skyleaf - a white tom with a brown stripe, tail, and paws and light blue eyes
Iceeye - a white and dark gray tabby tom with ice blue eyes
Apprentice, Copperpaw
Darkcloud - a lean black and white tom with yellow eyes

Apprentice, Snappaw
Branchtail - a dark brown tabby tom with dark green eyes
Sagelight - a muscular dark brown tabby she-cat with a fluffy mane, tail, and bright orangish yellow eyes
Rushfire - a lean ginger and red tabby tom with bright green eyes
Foxhop - a orange tabby tom with two white paws and bright green eyes
Apprentice, Petalpaw
Puddlesplash - a strong brown and silver tabby tom with one blue eye one green eye
Mapleclaw - a bright red tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes
Apprentice, Mothpaw
Orchidfrost - an almost all white she-cat except for the calico tail, face, and dark brown eyes
Nightrain - a dark grey speckled she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Slatefoot - a blue tom with silver paws and ice blue eyes

Apprentices
Copperpaw - a black tom with a white muzzle and bright orange eyes
Petalpaw - a dark golden she-cat with hazel eyes and darker points
Springpaw - a light grey fluffy speckled she-cat with dark green eyes
Snappaw - a cream tabby and speckled she-cat with lemon green eyes
Cardinalpaw - a white and red tortoiseshell she-cat with dark brown eyes
Mothpaw - a grey and brown tabby she-cat with fluffy chest and green eyes

Queens
Silverfeather - a silver and white tabby she-cat with purplish blue eyes (Flykit, Forestkit, Firekit, and Fallenkit)
Dawndrop - a ginger and cream tabby she-cat with dark brown eyes (Flutterkit and Sycamorekit)
Luckywish- a small but very fluffy silver tom with ice blue eyes and folded ears (Blizzardkit, Jaggedkit, and Minnowkit)
Neville - a grey and white tom with purple eyes

Elders

Rainstripe - a stocky blue tabby tom with blue eyes

Kits
Flykit - a dark brown tabby tom with a white belly, one white paw, dark brown paws, and bright orange eyes
Forestkit - a white and silver tabby she-cat with bright green eyes
Firekit - a white and ginger tabby tom with dark grey tail and purple eyes
Fallenkit - an all white , small she-cat with purplish blue eyes
Flutterkit - a grey and pale ginger tabby she-cat with blue eyes and round ears
Sycamorekit - a grey tabby tom with a white belly, big paws, and bright green eyes
Blizzardkit - a white and blue splotched tabby tom with yellow eyes
Jaggedkit - a spiky black tom with a large tail and green eyes
Minnowkit - a small silver she-cat with dark grey, folded ears and blue eyes

ShadowClan

Leader
Tinystar - a tiny silver tabby she-cat with yellow eyes
Apprentice, Talonpaw

Deputy
Sandheart - a pale sandy colored dapple tom with dark orange eyes
Apprentice, Hoppaw

Medicine Cat
Tallstem - a long tailed golden tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes
Sootfall - a stocky, dark grey tabby tom with bright amber eyes
Apprentice, Mistpaw

Warriors
Ryestep - a dark brown stocky tom with darker brown paws and dark orange eyes
Apprentice, Morningpaw
Berrystem - a short dark golden tabby tom with dark amber eyes
Finchflight - a dull brown fluffy tom with white mane, belly, one

paw, and dark hazel eyes
Leaffur - a grey tom with bright yellow eyes
Apprentice, Blossompaw
Sorrelscar - a dark golden fluffy, tabby tom with pale hazel eyes and a scratched up muzzle
Apprentice, Shinypaw
Shimmerheart - a fluffy, silver and golden she-cat with dark green eyes
Oakface - a white, heavily built tom with broken points and dark yellow eyes
Yarrowtuft - a dark yellow tabby tom with a fluffy tail and light brown eyes
Twigtail - a thin, brown and white fluffy she-cat with dark hazel eyes
Batwing - a large, fluffy black tom with purplish blue eyes
Apprentice, Sprucepaw
Lynxfur - a golden leopard tom with bright blue eyes
Apprentice, Badgerpaw
Cloverstem - a slightly fluffy, solid grey tom with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Sunpaw
Peareyes - a white and brown she-cat with hazel eyes
Shrewnose - a light brown tabby she-cat with darker brown paws and dark green eyes
Troutscale - a small dark grey dapple she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Apprentice, Cedarpaw

Apprentices
Hoppaw - a dull cream tabby tom with dull blue eyes
Sprucepaw - a velvety brown tabby tom with bright blue eyes
Blossompaw - a ginger and brown tabby tortoiseshell she-cat lemon green eyes
Badgerpaw - a fluffy black and white tom with bright brown eyes
Cedarpaw - a brown tortoiseshell tom with dark green eyed
Morningpaw - a sandy colored she-cat with green eyes
Sunpaw - a golden dapple tom with light blue eyes
Mistpaw - a silver fluffy tom with yellow eyes
Shinypaw - a silver and white tabby she-cat with dark green eyes
Talonpaw - a reddish-brown tabby she-cat with dull orange eyes

Queens
Swanfeather - a thin, white fluffy she-cat with dark green eyes (Snowkit)
Doveshade - a fluffy black and ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes

Elders
Flamefall - a lean orange tabby tom with bright yellow eyes. (Former Leader)

Kits
Snowkit - an all white fluffy tom with blue eyes (he is deaf)

WindClan

Leader
Snailstar - a thin, dark brown dapple tom with dark hazel eyes and a lame back leg

Deputy
Wildcloud - a fluffy, white tom with ginger splotches
Apprentice, Horsepaw

Medicine Cat
Daisyeyes - a small, fluffy, brown and white tortoiseshell she-cat with yellow eyes

Warriors
Rabbitpad - a dark brown tabby tom with large ears, gray belly, and dark green eyes
Spekflight - a orange she-cat with dark orange eyes and white splotches
Fernmist - a fluffy, dark grey tabby she-cat with pretty green eyes
Apprentice, Bristlepaw
Mistmask - a dark grey dapple she-cat with blue eyes
Hayheart - a yellow she-cat with dark brown eyes
Thrushfeather - a dull brown tabby tom with pale blue eyes
Roseflare - a fluffy, ginger and silver tortoiseshell she-cat with orange eyes
Flowerbreeze - a white thin she-cat with orange splotches and

golden eyes
Mudstripe - a dark brown tabby tom with aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Heronpaw
Swiftwater - a grey tom with dark green eyes, white chest, and two light grey paws
Ferretflight - a brown tabby tom with green eyes
Apprentice, Archpaw
Leafbloom - a brown and golden tortoiseshell she-cat with gold eyes
Rustfur - a orange tabby tom with grayish blue eyes

Apprentices
Horsepaw - a brown tom with one white paw and bright ambers eyed
Heronpaw - a light brown tabby tom with grey eyes
Archpaw - a red and white tabby she-cat with lemon green eyes
Specklepaw - a light brown speckled she-cat with brown eyes

Queens
Birchleaf - a muscular brownish ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with bright hazel eyes (Rowankit, Shadykit, Fennelkit)
Aspenskip - a gray she-cat with dark points and blueish gray eyes (Cricketkit and Cavekit)
Milkweed - a lean golden tabby she-cat with bright amber eyes

Elders
None.

Kits
Rowankit - a reddish-brown tabby tom with aquamarine eyes
Shadykit - a orange and dark gray tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes
Fennelkit - a light brown tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Cricketkit - a orange dapple she-cat with dark brown eyes
Cavekit - a tiny white tom with dark gray points and amber eyes
Sunnykit - a ginger and white tabby tom with green eyes
Cloudykit - a white and black fluffy tom with orange eyes
Rainykit - a white and dark gray splotched she-cat with purple eyes

Riverclan

Leader
Briarstar - a lean, black and brown tabby tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes

Deputy
Shortlake - a silver tom with dark blueish grey eyes and a stumpy tail

Medicine Cat
Grassswirl - a dark brown spotted she-cat with dark green eyes
Ravennest - a black and orange tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes

Warriors
Owlback - a stocky speckled brown tom with amber eyes
Flailbelly - a large, fluffy gray speckled tom with white belly, chest, and bright amber eyes.
Mossyflower - a fluffy blue she-cat with darker blue splotches and aquamarine eyes
Scorchfire - a black and ginger tortoiseshell tom with bright orange eyes and a fluffy tail
Apprentice, Bluepaw
Clifffern - an orangish brown tabby tom with green eyes
Lightningcloud - a fluffy dark grey tom with a darker grey mane and bright yellow eyes
Tansypelt - a silver she-cat with a fluffy tail and hazel eyes
Gorsefern - a golden she-cat with white chest, belly, muzzle, and lemon green eyes
Redleap - a dull red stocky tom with orange eyes, white chest, and belly.
Reedbee - a silverish blue tabby she-cat with minty green eyes
Boulderstep - a dark blue dapple tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Russetpaw
Willowheart - a silver fluffy tom with white paw, muzzle, and dark green eyes
Apprentice, Jaypaw
Tornpelt - a gray and white tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Apprentice, Rainpaw
Crowflight - a solid dark gray fluffy tom with brown eyes
Apprentice, Wetpaw

Thicketshade - a cream tabby she-cat with orange point and bright amber eyes

Apprentices
Jaypaw - a silver and grey fluffy tom with amber eyes
Rainpaw - a grayish blue speckled tom with dark blue eyes and a fluffy tail
Wetpaw - a blue tabby she-cat with brown points and aquamarine eyes
Russetpaw- a orangish brown tabby she-cat with bright brown green eyes
Aspenpaw - a blue she-cat with darker points and orange eyes

Queens
Goldenfang - a white she-cat with golden spots and yellow eyes
Swampsong - a cream tom with brown points and amber eyes (Lichenkit, Ripplekit, and Hawkkit)

Elders
Deerstripe - a fluffy gray tom with brown patches and orange eyes
Thistlepad - a large, fluffy ginger tom with bright yellow eyes
Plumfeather - a fluffy golden tabby she-cat with bright purple eyes

Kits
Lichenkit - a cream tom with brown points and gray eyes
Ripplekit - a brown tabby she-cat with orange eyes
Hawkkit - a dark red tabby she-cat with amber eyes

SkyClan

Leader
Whitestar - a black fluffy tom with white paws, ears, tipped tail, and orange eyes
Apprentice, Elkpaw

Deputy
Dewmist - a blue fluffy tom with darker points and blue eyes
Apprentice, Nettlepaw

Medicine Cat
Beachjaw - a large fluffy dark sandy tom with darker points and hazel eyes
Apprentice, Brookpaw

Warriors
Ashbreeze - a large fluffy smokey gray tom with bright orange eyes
Leafybush - a fluffy brown tabby tom with white chest, belly, paws, muzzle, and dull aquamarine eyes
Hornetstripe - a dull orangish yellow tabby tom with amber eyes, a white belly, and chest
Sorrelfall - a grey tabby tom with green eyed
Apprentice, Curlypaw
Hawkflight - a white tom with red tabby points and aquamarine eyes
Brindlepelt - a lean brown and ginger tabby tortoiseshell she-cat with golden eyes
Songheart - a black and white she-cat (not a tom) with blue eyes
Rubblebounce - a blue dapple fluffy tom with amber eyes
Patchfur - a dark gray and ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Flintpaw

Apprentices
Flintpaw- a large and fluffy silver tom with light brown eyes
Nettlepaw - a stocky, brown and white tabby she-cat with green eyes
Brookpaw - a light grey tabby she-cat with blue eyes
Curlypaw - a large fluffy brown tabby tom with dull green eyes
Elkpaw - a dark brown tom with tabby points and blueish grey eyes

Queens
Lagoontail - a silver blue lean she-cat with red orangish eyes and a silver tipped tail (Mousekit and Lilykit)
Lakemask - a ginger and white tortoiseshell she-cat with bright aquamarine eyes (Snowykit and Wingkit)
Pearlstreak - a grey and white dapple she-cat with bright yellow eyes (Peakkit, Honeykit, and Vinekit)

Elders
Weedfoot - a golden tabby tom with bright green eyes

Kits
Snowykit - a blue and silver she-cat with bright blue eyes
Wingkit - a white tom with an orange splotch and dull blue eyes
Peakkit - a black and grey fluffy tom with amber eyes and a fluffy tail
Honeykit - a golden dapple she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Vinekit - a sandy colored tabby she-cat with green eyes
Mousekit - a dark brown tabby tom with dark gray underbelly and orange eyes
Lilykit - a white she-cat with silver tabby points and red eyes

Loners and Kittypets
Cody - a fluffy black tom with a missing right foot and green eyes
Talon - A ginger and white tabby she-cat with grey paws and blue eyes
Harmony - a black and white she-cat with orange eyes
Breaker - orangish red fluffy tabby tom with yellow eyes
Fitz - a fluffy brown tabby tom with golden eyes

Proluge

(Around the time Puddlesplash and the other two were kits)

I watched as dusk slowly turned into night. Below Highrock, many of my warriors and apprentices were going to their nests while my night guard made their rounds around the camp walls to check for anything irregular. The fear and paranoia in the air made leaf-fall feel chillier than normal. I shivered at the thought of another attack. I stood up and began dragging my tired paws to my den when I heard a little voice whisper nearby.

"Shhh, we need to be quiet if we wanna sneak out" I heard a little she-cats mew whisper between some rubble.

"Sor-Sorry Maplekit," apologized a little tom kit, "the rock was poking me". I giggled and sat watching the talking rubble pile.

"Shhh!"

"Sorry-"

"I said Shhhhhh!" There wasn't anymore sound from the rubble. Kindpetal, Smokefoot, and Frostflower, the three on posted on night guard tonight, left camp to check some areas around the outside of the bracken wall. For a a few moments, no noise could be heard from the Little Rock pile near my den. I thought maybe the two kits fell asleep by accident until I say a little red head poke out. I smiled again and watched as Maplekit swiftly looked around the clearing, completely forgetting to check where I was, before scurrying out of their hiding spot. "Come one Puddlekit!" She hissed at the rubble pile.

"Sor-Sorry" a little grey and brown tom kit popped out and scurried up to his friend. I felt a little sad as I watched the odd kit. Puddlekit has had it rough already, with his extremely worrisome pelt combo. Puddlekit was a light grey and a rich brown dapple tom. Half of his face was one color and the other half the other. Not only that, but

the little tom also has two different colored eyes. Many of my older warriors and some of the younger ones believe Puddlekit is a bad omen, and once he isn't a kit should be shoved out of Thunderclan immediately.

Oh Starclan, even his own kin tried to kill him! I can't just let this little kit be shunned by my clan. Coldheart, my son, had left earlier to travel to the moonpool in search of answers of what to do with little Puddlekit. I had seen him hanging out a lot with Moonkit and Coldheart in the medicine cat den. Coldheart can't seem to keep them away while he works. *Maybe his pelt is just a sign of his connection to Starclan. Maybe he is supposed to become a medicine cat.*

"Come on! Adventure awaits!" Maplekit puffed her chest out and began walking to the camp entrance. Puddlekit dragged his paws behind her. The odd kit knows this isn't right. I sigh and follow them a little.

"Where do you two think you're going?" Maplekit froze on the spot, while Puddlekit sequeled and leaped around.

"Wishstar! We we-were just-ju-" Puddlekit nervously tried to cover for their tails.

"Don't try to lie Puddlekit, it was rhetorical" I gave him a knowing look. Maplekit finally turned around.

"I was going to show Puddlekit the territory so he could be closer to becoming a great warrior!" the little red kit declared profoundly. Puddlekit gave her a look of pleading to stop. I sighed and ignored my sneaky suspicion that Maplekit snuck out before.

"Oh?" I played along.

"Yeah, isn't that what the next greatest leader should do!"

"There is more than just knowing your territory little kit"

"I am not little!" She spiked up, looking like a little red tuft of fur. Her hazel eyes sparkling with determination. "And I know I will need to know how to fight and hunt!"

"There is more than that. You need to be responsible and know what is right and safe for your clanmates" I let it sink in for a sec. She clenches her jaw in confusion before flicking her ears.

"Oooooh!" She smiles up at me and then looks at Puddlekit. "Puddlekit, I was about to put your life in danger!"

"Wha-" Puddlekit scrunched you from nerves.

"And the future leader should never put her clan mates in harms way for stupid things! I'm sorry!"

"It's okay Maplekit" Puddlekit mumbled. I felt releaved that Maplekit realizes her mistake.

"Maplekit!" I recognized the voice and turned my head. Breezeheat, a stocky dark red tom with yellow eyes, tatted over looking pissed. "What are you doing our here?" He asked once he was next to his daughter.

"Talking with Wishstar!"

At least it is partly the truth. I held myself back from giggling. *She is so mischievous.*

"You shouldn't be bothering the leader!" He scolded his daughter. I was starting to get annoyed with my older warrior.

I may be leader, but I am still just a cat too. I stopped looking at Breezeheat with annoyance as he turned his attention to me.

"I am so sorry Wishstar. Maplekit can be super bratty from time to time"

"No I'm not!" Maplekit defended herself. Breezeheat quieted his daughter with a yellow glare. She scrunched up her face in irritation and grumbled at her paws.

"It is fine Breezeheat, I was just about to send these two to the nursery"

"Oh" Breezeheat looked down at Puddlekit. The look in his eyes

made my motherly instincts come out in defense for this odd kit. His scowl was a mixture of suspicion, anger, and maybe unease. He pulled Maplekit closer to himself and clenched his jaw. Puddlekit was a very attentive kit and looked ready to weep from the bias gaze of the large warrior.

Stop that Breezeheat! Instead I cleared my throat and wrapped my tail around Puddlekit. Breezeheat shook his head and once again glanced at me.

"I am sorry again Wishstar"

Say sorry to Puddlekit as well was something I also wanted to say, but I knew better it wouldn't be sincere. More like mockery and spite, or pity. He picked his daughter up in his mouth and walked her back to the nursery. Puddlekit began following Breezeheat back as well. His ears were pinned back and his tail dragged sadly behind him. *The day shouldn't end like this.* "Puddlekit, come here for a second" I called out to him.

"Umm" Puddlekit looked worried but trotted swiftly back. He looked up at me with his two different, round eyes of dismay. It hurts me to see him so distraught, and I wasn't even his mother.

Poor Spottedsnow... "Puddlekit," I started, "I want you to know that if you work hard as an apprentice your clan mates won't treat you the way they do now. They just haven't gotten the chance to know you yet"

"But-but everyone says I am a monster... that's what Darkkit says anyway..."

"Ignore Darkkit" I groan which made Puddlekit laugh a little. "Everyone is always weary of things they don't understand, but once they do they will except you. Okay?"

"Okay!" His green and blue eyes looked happy, but I could tell he didn't believe me still. Before I could say more he ran off to the nursery to where his nest with Spottedsnow and his brothers lay waiting. I sigh and began walking back to my den. I didn't even get to start climbing up to it before I spotted Coldheart push his way

back into camp. His face was a mask of unknown emotions, but I felt something was wrong. Coldheart spotted me and briskly trotted over.

"You are back early" I said as he sat in front of me. It was hard to mask the worry in my voice.

"Starclan didn't have much to say" he grumbled. My son avoided eye contact and watched the nursery. He was snarky and cold with everyone, even me and his father and sister. The black tom was even rude Starclan, even though he is a medicine cat. I gazed into his blue eyes as I could tell he was lying.

Coldheart can't look you in the eye when he is lying. He still does it now as when he did as a kit. Instead of asking him directly, I swatted around the bush. "Tell me what happened?"

"All they said was Puddlekit was a sign of change. That we are making him out worse then needed"

He is still lying. Coldheart continued to stare at the nursery. I flicked my tail in annoyance. "That isn't the truth"

"It is. He is just a normal cat"

"You aren't making eye contact! I know you are lying" I hissed. "I am you leader! If something bad is gonna happen then tell me!"

"Puddlekit isn't suppose to be one my apprentices!" He spat out. He stood up towering over me as he lashed his tail out. He was clearly upset and I was actually scared. His sheer size had always made him look like a menacing warrior. The mass of his fur didn't help either.

Starclan! He actually did care about Puddlekit! He did want him to be his apprentice! I felt horrible. Coldheart calmed down and continued to watch the nursery. His fur relaxed, as did mine. "I am sorry"

"Don't be". We sat in silence before he grumbled more words but it was incoherent. My son then stood up and slumpily dragged himself to the medicine cat den. As I watched the large fluffy tom, something was still eating at me.

Is this feeling something Starclan is trying to tell me? Is he still withholding something? Would Coldheart keep secrets for Puddlekits safety? Maybe I should discuss it more with Pinestripe...

Chapter 1: Puddlesplash

I slowly stalked towards the busy mouse. The little fat grey plump was busy eating away at some seeds it had found most likely from foraging.

This will be an easy catch! I thought. The wind was blowing towards me and the area was scarce of leaves. I took a few much quieter steps towards the grey mouse. You could barely hear my paws as I placed each one very carefully. I stopped as now I was in leaping distance. I scrunched up my brown paws underneath me and leaped at the mouse. It didn't even have time to squeak as I bite down on its neck swiftly. *I think I have caught enough, should go find Slatefoot, Rushfire, and Kindpetal.* In total, I had caught three mice and a vole. Enough to feed the kits and Rainstripe. "It's Green-Leaf, I shouldn't worry to much about catching enough" *But you do!* Said my own internally mocking voice. I followed the path I had taken to all my other kills, knowing I am gonna need help carrying the prey I caught. As I reached where I slightly buried my second mouse I heard a bit of some clumsy foot work rushing through some bushes. I giggled with mouse in my mouth and place it next to my second mouse. I watched as my mate Rushfire came crashing through with nothing.

"Oh! Hey there!" He said cheerfully. He shook his red and ginger pelt of the leaves he had collected. I rolled my eyes and purred.

"Cats in Riverclan could hear you" I mew playfully. He stretched his long legs and glared at me jokingly. Other than his long legs, Rushfire looked like a Thunderclan cat. He had a strong build and a tenacity to get in over his head. "Did you catch anything?"

"Oh I did!" He lied, "but a fox took it"

"Uh uh" I gave him a smug look.

"Yes" he came over and licked my forehead with a purr. "It was a big eagle! Big enough to have fed the entire clan"

"Oh Starclan, and a fox carried it away" I played along. Rushfire pawed my side with an annoyed glance before looking down at the two I had collected.

"Ah, but the greatest hunter always out hunts me"

"Yeah, I have another mouse and vole to collect too"

"I'll help you" he gave me another lick before picking up my second mouse. He smiled and followed me back towards my mouse and vole. After picking up my last two catches, we headed back to our meet up place to hopefully find Kindpetal and Slatefoot. As we reached the training clearing, I spotted the silver blue pelt of my former apprentice Slatefoot sitting there alone. He had a silky coat like a Riverclan cat but was thin like a Windclan cat. An oddity like me. Slatefoot spotted me and Rushfire and flicked his ears happily.

"Hey guys! Look what I caught!" Even though he is a warrior, he still tries to make us proud of him. In front of him was a brown and white fluffy rabbit. One of incredible size.

"Wow! Great catch Slatefoot" I said as I placed my catch down. Rushfire did the same.

"It ran right into my claws, I am just lucky it didn't notice me"

"Well it's a good catch, you might wanna show it off to Neville if you want"

"Dad might try to eat it" Slatefoot kinda joked. I laughed a little and looked around.

"Is Kindpetal still hunting?"

"No, she left for camp a little while ago before you showed up" Slatefoot answered. "She said she was gonna take the shrew she caught to Coldheart the grump"

"Ah, and she beat me to it! I really wanted to hear Coldhearts snarky remarks today" Rushfire said in a sarcastic whiny voice. I smiled and rolled my eyes.

"Coldheart is fine once you get to know him"

"Easy for you to say" Rushfire tried to paw my ear but I had ducked out of the way with a gleeful smirk. My mates green eyes sparked with mischief as I laughed.

"We should head back now" Slatefoot said dutifully. He picked up his rabbit and began dragging back to camp. It was a really big rabbit. We carried our prey back as Rushfire and I continued to playfully batter at each other. Ravenclaw was on guard duty again as my hunting party reached the bracken tunnel that entered into camp.

"Took you guys long enough, thought maybe you guys got eaten by something"

"I am too stubborn to die" Rushfire quipped with a mouse and vole in his mouth. I was surprised his words were coherent enough. Ravenclaw grumbled something and shook his head. I smiled at Ravenclaw weakly and the followed Slatefoot into camp.

I hope he isn't too mad now.... I thought. In camp, at sun high, it was busy with cats. Most were enjoying the sunlight before going out later for patrols. On one side of the clearing Silverfeather was watching her kits play with a moss ball while closer to the entrance littermates Petalpaw and Copperpaw waited for their mentors. Those two are completing their warriors assessments today. *I should ask Foxhop if he needs advice.* Petalpaw spotted us and glared claws at us, but then quickly stopped when she realized I was watching her. *She is so much like her dad, judgy and opinionated.* I didn't show my frustration at the apprentice, just smiled at the golden she-cat and stood up a little straighter. *Everything is fine, just work hard and be nice! Don't let anyone see-*

"Hey Puddlesplash! Is that for us?" mewed two kits. I looked over to my left and saw Forestkit and Flykit walking beside me. The two kits had wandered away from Silverfeather and were eyeing one of the mice in my jaw. I smiled again and put one down.

"Why don't you take that to your mom?" I asked. The two went wide eyed and quickly grabbed the mouse. Between the two of

them they attempted to carry it to share credit for being good kits. Though it was funny watching Forestkit try and keep up with her bigger brothers.

"You are so good with kits" Rushfire mewed gently. I shook my head at him and looked sadly at him.

"I am good with other cats kit, I have no idea how to parent"

"Your brother Luckywish is accomplishing it somehow" Rushfire pointed out as we dropped our prey in the pile.

"To add something, Darkcloud is doing most of the heavy lifting when it comes to their kits" Slatefoot added.

"Yeah, Darkcloud is such a great father" Rushfire said sarcastically. His green eyes rolled over and gave me a look of 'don't you agree?'

"I think he is" it was hard to compliment my childhood bully, but I have been trying to put it aside for Luckywish. Rushfire seemed defeated, but just shrugged.

"Eh, I might just not like the black and white furball"

"I should go see Luckywish actually, I haven't even seen his kits yet. Do you think I could or is Coldheart still keeping them in quarantine?" Slatefoot wondered aloud

"Hey Puddlesplash! Can you go get your brother? He said something about clearing his head at the lake" said a she-cat. I turned my head around to see Kindpetal starring at me with a gentle smile on her face. The golden tabby looked a lot like her father Pinestripe, except for the brown eyes.

"Oh! Is he alright?"

"Don't know, he looked ready to have a panic attack. Kinda reminded me of you at your first gathering."

"Alrighty then" I sounded a little confused and alarmed. Last time my ginger brother was worried and concerned was when he got nervous to ask me the question 'are you gay?'. It was kinda funny

looking back on it now. I licked Rushfires check, causing Slatefoot to make a satirical fake gag noise behind, and left camp again. As I passed Ravenclaw I stopped.

"I'll be back soon"

"You better be," he said cooly, "without you Rushfire will run rampant"

"Hehe, yeah" I laughed. I left towards the lake and realized something as I walked along the well treaded path. *He should be doing Petalpaw's warrior assessment, not talking to me.* I sighed and complained more in my head. *He can be such a worry cat, I hope this doesn't delay her assessment.* As I reached the beech, I spotted my brother ginger tabby pelt. "Foxhop!" I called out as my paws stepped on the shifting pebbles. *Doesn't he realize I don't like being this close to the lake?* I could feel my heart beat faster with each step on the rocky shore.

His ginger tabby head turned around quickly. I don't think I have ever seen him more nervous than right now, which concerned me. "Oh good! I need someone to talk to!" He ran up to me as I sat on the edge of beech and forest.

"What's wrong?" I didn't even try to mask the worry in my voice.

"Well-I-I I don't know how I am gonna do the assessment!" He stuttered. Foxhop started to lace nervously

Aww fox dung... I groaned in my head, but surprisingly I kept a straight face. "Foxhop did we have to leave camp for this?"

"It's kinda obvious that Petalpaw is gonna pass her warrior assessment, she is awesome even without my teaching" he ignored my question and continued to pace. I could hear him hyperventilating and perked my ears in concern. "But that is in fighting. You helped- no you literally were the one to teach her hunting? What if that comes out that I only did half the work? What if she messes up hunting? Everyone knows I am a horrendous hunter so everyone will automatically know it was my fault. But I don't want you to blame yourself if she does. What if she is held

back while Copperpaw becomes a warrior? This could delay my plans in becoming deputy or-"

"Stop and take a deep breathe" I order. He stopped pacing and slowly takes in deep breathes and lets it out, which calmed the ginger tom down slowly. "Feel better?"

"Yeah, a little bit"

"Good, now you need to put faith that Petalpaw will do well. She is talented besides the sas and will make a great warrior. You have done all you can do let her take the lead" his green eyes fidgeted with fear and relief at the same time. He looked like he wanted to cry from the pressure so I pulled him in close and gave him a gentle hug.

"You sure? You sure she will be fine?" Foxhop didn't sound convinced.

"Of course! And let's be honest Pineclaw won't let his mini self get held back. He'll tear the entire woods apart if that happens" I gave him a confident squeeze. Foxhop's shoulders jumbled as he laughed looking up at me, the confidence so common in his green eyes sparking to life again.

"Yeah! You're right!" He sounded more confident too.

Why am I this good?

"Thanks Puddlesplash!" Foxhop called out as he raced into the forest.

How is he so easily able to just spur himself into boldness? I sigh aloud into the warm air. *At least he might see mom again if he become leader.* A small pang of grief filled my chest and I realized I hadn't visited her grave in awhile. "Mmmm..." something felt heavy in my chest.

I trotted into the Thunderclan woods as I recalled fond memories with Spottedsnow. I remember how she would lay out moss balls so we could practice pouncing without bothering anyone. Or how she would always insist on us playing in the nursery so it would be

easier to keep us in sight. "She was always so careful..." I said as I reached the place we bury our dead. I had stopped and sat at the foot of her grave and realized it really had been awhile since I visited. Flowers had started growing on her grave and the rock we had put there to mark it was surrounded by grass. "Sorry mom, it's been awhile. Been kinda busy with warrior duties" I imagined her silver spotted pelt pressed against mine as she sat next to me to hear my news. "I don't know if Luckywish has been here to tell you but he and Darkcloud had kits. Two toms and a she-kit!" I stopped and laughed a them getting their legs in order to walk. "Minnowkit has folded ear like Luckywish, and Blizzardkit is really handsome! Jaggedkit looks like a spike ball you could throw, and already has the personality of one" I joked. I imagined Spottedsnow laughing a little too. "You would really enjoy them mom, and I think Sagelight and Foxhop will have some someday too but Foxhop has to actually ask" I stopped and could feel the grief rise again. I clenched my jaw to hold back the choking in my voice, "I miss you a lot mom..."

Chapter 2: Sagelight

I wonder if Foxhop is done with Petalpaw's assessment? I thought as we traveled up along our Skyclan border. Sadly, Pineclaw was leading the patrol so every stop was him thinking Skyclan had crossed the border here. We actually had stopped again because of his ego.

"See! I am telling you they are crossing our border!" Pineclaw hissed. He was sniffing a bush on the border between our clans. Tanglestripe rolled his eyes at Pineclaws attempt at stirring trouble. I held back my giggle at the sight of the frustrated senior warrior.

"Can you please stop? We have a job to do"

"Yeah, yeah, but we should report this to Wishstar!" Pineclaw sounded like a kit asking for attention. He even puffed out his cheeks in frustration making himself look more childish.

Yeah, report your stupidity. I wanted to retort but held my tongue.

"Pineclaw, it's on the border" Tanglestripe grumbled, "Besides, it is faint. Skyclan doesn't have the Warriors to do constant patrols so can we just continue?"

"It-well...it smelled fresh to me... big old grump-look like a badger..." Pineclaw muttered in defeat as we began walking along the path again. It's a small patrol but mostly because Skyclan is our greatest ally, even after the Rushfire incident. Me, the most social cat in Thunderclan, was stuck with quite (but very respectful depending on who you are) Tanglestripe and battle hungry Pineclaw. Neither really liked talking. In Pineclaw's case talking is all about the gossip and the backstabbing.

Ugh... this patrol seems to be never ending... the air of sun high was warm and it was very comfortable today. The light glowing through the canopy was beautiful as it danced on the forest floor. Tanglestripe sniffed some bushes and sighed. Nothing out of normal now, even if the border is faint. Tanglestripe flicked his striped tail

as he stared up into the tree branches. He seemed to also be admiring the green-lead beauty.

"It's nice out today" Tanglestripe commented.

"Yeah! It is a great day to have fun!" I smiled. Tanglestripe gave me a weak smile and nodded. Pineclaw rolled his eyes and grumbled inaudible words. *Sigh, at least I am trying!* Up ahead I heard something moving through some bushes on the Skyclan side of the border. *Must be a Skyclan patrol. Oh! Maybe it's my friend Lagoontail!* Tanglestripe sniffed the air and quickly gave a sigh of relief.

"It's Skyclan" he announced. Just as he said that a small group of three cats came out. Sorrelfall led a group only consisting of Patchfur and Hawkflight. I smiled at immediately and Sorrelfall smiled back.

"Hi Sorrelfall!"

"Hey guys!" He purred. Both patrols stopped and faced eachother. "How is everything in Thunderclan?"

"A whole lot of kits" Tanglestripe informed. I laughed a little as brown tabby has been on a lot of hunting patrols.

"And enjoying the sun!" I smile big.

"That's great" Patchfur said calmly. "How is Puddlesplash?"

"He is fine!" Pineclaw hissed, he than began glaring at me and Tanglestripe. "We have to finish up"

"Calm yourself Pineclaw" Tanglestripe ordered. Pineclaw lashed his tail in anger and then began continuing ahead, still mumbling.

"Big grump" I said with a laugh. I looked at Hawkflight and tried to bring a smile upon his face. But the tom avoided our gaze. *Is he still mad about Rushfire?* Rushfire didn't look a whole lot like Hawkflight other than them
being both red tabby's, but even then they were different shades. I puffed my checks out in indignation at his coldness.

"How is Rushfire?" Patchfur asked. "He and Puddlesplash weren't at the last gathering"

"He is great! Him and Puddlesplash have-" As I spoke Hawkflight pinned his ears back and began walking away. Everyone stopped and watched the tabby tom leave. Patchfur's joyful facade fell for a second as she glared at him. Sorrelfall looked sad for a second before turning to us with a weak smile.

"We should get on with our Patrol"

"Same, we should really catch up with Pineclaw before he does anything stupid" Tanglestripe bowed a little. Sorrelfall bowed back the same and followed after Hawkflight with Patchfur dragging her paws. She shot me a sympathetic glance before turning away.

"Say hi to the lovebirds for me! And tell Rushfire don't do anything stupid too!"

"I will!" I called after her. As I followed the older tabby my smile faltered. "Sigh, I didn't think Hawkflight would still be upset" I mumbled.

"His own kit left to be with another cat in a different clan, I would feel the same way too if Skyleaf did that. You would have no clear idea of how your own blood is doing. Though it could be just is hateful bitter self" Tanglestripe gave old wisdom.

If I had kits, I would want them to be happy... I sighed aloud.

"Have you met Minnowkit yet?" Tanglestripe asked awhile after we went up the border. I was a little startled and cocked my head out of confusion.

"Not fully, since Luckywish has a weak immune system Coldheart doesn't want anyone near the kits till he knows if the three of them inherited it"

"I was talking to Darkcloud and it seems Minnowkit and maybe Jaggedkit might have it. Since they already have colds" Tanglestripe tried to disguise his worry.

"Oh?" *Poor Luckywish and Darkcloud. Foxhop was telling me about how worried his littermate was about it.*

"I am worried about them, it's green-leaf but if the kits are sick then what if Luckywish does too"

"Well, your old apprentice is just as stubborn as his dad, I bet his kits inherited it too and all three will be fine" I smiled in an attempt to comfort.

"Heh, yeah..." Tanglestripe seemed off. *Maybe it's all this death talk.* I didn't push the older tom and looked around. I realized this was more enjoyable than I thought, which felt wrong. "Wait, shouldn't we have caught up with Pineclaw by now?"

"Yeah, maybe he went back to camp already" Tanglestripe sniffed some plants and began marking again. We walked a bit, unconcerned by the lack of Pineclaw. That was, until something wrong hit our noses.

"Is-is that blood I smell" I stutter a little, taking in more sniffs of the warm day. *It is!*

"It smells fresh too," Tanglestripe growled. We looked around but could not find the source of the blood. The scent was strong, sending uncomfortable memories of battles with Windclan to flicker in my head.

I hope Pineclaw is okay...no I bet he is! He is an amazing fighter! I went over to a very thick fern and shifted its branches around with my paw to see underneath it. Nothing there to see but light shadows and the stem of the big fern. I let the bushes go and sighed. "Maybe it's some wounded animal?" I sounded to Tanglestripe who was looking up some branches of a close oak.

"Maybe..." he looked around skeptically. "The scent seems stronger over in that tiny clearing" he pointed with his tail to where I am guessing an area beyond the juniper bushes. As I trotted over to the dark green bushes the smell was like a hitting into a wall of bloody fragrants.

"Ack" I crinkled my nose. "Did a Fox die?"

"I hope not, it will lure-" Tanglestripe stopped mid-sentence after he moved the bushes. In the small stoney clearing on a flat rock was the body of a golden and black tom. Not just any tom, but Pineclaw. Blood stained the rock and it dribbled down the side like a small red creek. His belly and face faced away from us, which I was happy about as I didn't want to see his cold blank eyes.

"Oh Starclan..." I felt guilt and pity fill my mind and body. "What are we gonna tell Dawndrop and her kits?" *Flutterkit and Sycamorekit will grow up without a dad, and he never got to see Petalpaw and Copperpaws warrior ceremony!* Tanglestripe searched around Pineclaws body and immediate hissed and put is ears back. I approached cautiously as I watched the tabby toms dark orange eyes fill will fury and questions.

"This wasn't any wild animal, it was a cat! There is cat fur between his claws!"

"What? Bu-but who would kill Pineclaw?"

"Some cat with red fur..."

Chapter 3: Mapleclaw

I walked along the shallows of the lake. The water felt cool on paws and felt the high energy tingling in my body just melt away with the calmness of the lake waves. *This is nice, best way to relax after everything.* I had sent Mothpaw out to catch something, anything really. *She isn't doing well hunting wise...* the water lapse at my ankles and removed my dissatisfaction with my apprentice.

"Mapleclaw?" Mothpaw's worried mew sounded from behind me. I sigh and turn my head around. She brought no prey at all and felt the disappointment surface at me again. Mothpaw's grey and brown fur shifted in the lake breeze and her dark green eyes sparked with frustration.

"Mothpaw I said you need to catch something" I raised an eyebrow, "if you caught air then you did great, but I don't think our clan mates can eat that"

"I know" Mothpaw sounded upset, "but Applebrook is having everyone come back to camp, Pineclaw has been killed"

Even beyond death he is still annoying me I growled in my head. "Alright, but we are doing this again tomorrow"

"Okay..." Mothpaw looked away out of disappointment in herself. I shook my head and lead my apprentice back to camp.

How do I train an apprentice who can't seem to go from practice to practical?

"How do you think Pineclaw died?" She asked.

"Fox or maybe a snake"

"Poor Petalpaw and Copperpaw..."

"They will get over it"

"Are you going to say the same thing about Flutterkit and Sycamorekit?" She grumbled. I pulled my ears back and glanced at my apprentice.

"They will be raised upon stories of how 'great' their father was, nothing more. Besides I grew up in times of a lot more death than this, I am completely fine and so will they"

"Pineclaw was a good cat, even if he was... very straightforward"

"Everyone says a cat was a 'good' cat after they are dead," I started lecturing, "like they are afraid of the dead cat striking them down from Starclan"

"Starclan is full of good warriors and such!" Mothpaw protested. I held back my snicker.

Yeah, sure... what is considered good is based on opinion... I felt the weight if my memories of my dad press my spirit down. *Fox hearted coward...*

"Isn't that what Starclan is? A place of rest for cats of greatness?"

"Yes, but not all cats are pure" I began again, "all cats lie or do something against the Warrior code at some point. 'Good' is subjective Mothpaw". Mothpaw stayed quite for a few moments, I guess she was thinking.

"Then what do you do to end up in the dark forest?"

"I don't know, guess it's up to how Starclan really judges cats"

"What if you don't believe in Starclan? Like Ravenclaw?"

I-umm... "It Starclan's judgment"

"Oh! So hopefully Ravenclaw will get into Starclan!" Mothpaw let out a breath of relief for the large black fluffy tom. We continued walking in silence and soon had made our way back to camp. Unlike this morning where every cat was chill, relaxed, and joyful, the air now was heavy with grief and suspense. Everyone was almost here which kinda surprised me. *Wishstar and Applebrook*

really are quick about this. I quickly spotted Pineclaws still bloody body laying in some shaded protected area of camp and I stiffened. *It would have been better if you weren't found so fast...* I grumble. Orchidfrost came running over quickly, desperate to see if we were okay.

"Hi Mom" Mothpaw greeted, but it was dry. I just gave my sister a nod.

Go away

"You two are okay right? When Sagelight and Tanglestripe brought Pineclaws body into camp I got worried for you two!" Her cream white tail flicked to the side.

"Is Cardinalpaw back yet?" Mothpaw asked emotionless. Orchidfrost almost flinched at the nothingness in her daughters voice, but my sisters eyes were filled with hurt.

"She-she is with Springpaw and Snappaw right now, by the apprentice den". Mothpaw nodded at her mom and left to find her sister. Orchidfrost ears pinned back as she watched her daughter leave. "At least me and Mothpaw are on talking terms... Cardinalpaw shoved past me roughly when I asked"

"What do you expect from kits you didn't raise?" I growled and pushed past my sister. She didn't even try to stop me. Before I got far yet again I was stopped, but at least this time it is a friend.

"Mapleclaw are you and Mothpaw alright?" Puddlesplash asked softly.

"Yeah, of course. Are you? I know you were out on a hunting patrol"

"We had gotten back earlier" the silver and brown tom answered. "If I had known you and Mothpaw went out hunting I would have invited you"

"Wai-wait who told you" I tried to hide the panic from my voice.

"Ravenclaw saw you and Mothpaw leave a little bit after us" he cocked his head to the side in concern. "You sure you are ok? You

look scared?"

"I-I am just a little shocked... and a little happy it didn't happen to me or Mothpaw" I lied. We both went quiet and sat off to the side. Rushfire disturbed it.

"The clan is just buzzing right now, Foxhop made it back to camp right?" He asked Puddlesplash. My friend jumped a little bit quickly smiled.

"Yeah, he made it back before I did"

"Ok great! I guess Petalpaw and Copperpaws assessment was held back" the two toms continued to talk. I zoned out of their conversation and watched the rest of the clan buzz around in panic and worry about Pineclaw's death. I spotted Dawndrop leaving Wishstar's den, along with Foxhop and lazy Iceeye. *What were they talking about?* Wishstar followed shortly after and nodded at Applebrook, who nodded back.

"All cats old enough to catch their own prey, join under high rock!" The black tortoiseshell leaders voice echoed around the camp. Cats began huddling around the clearing, with some leaving dens. I watched as Silverfeather shoved her kits back into the nursery as they wanted to come listen too.

"No, not right now" Silverfeather order her four fuzz balls.

"But mom-" Firekit protested, but the grey and orange tom didn't get to finish. I turned my attention back to Wishstar. I studied her for a second as she waited for her clanmates to settle. The tortoiseshell was really starting to show her age, with the grey along her muzzle and ears giving light to the fact she won't be leader for very long. After a few short moments later, Wishstar started talking.

"Sadly, Pineclaw has passed away today" as she talked many cats began whispering their theories. I think I heard some cat say the tom was attacked by a twoleg.

Yeah... he wasn't... I sneer a little to myself.

"Tanglestripe and Coldheart both confirm that it was by a cat! Until

this suspect is brought to justice no cat is allowed to go out by themselves, especially the apprentices!" I heard some groans and tiny complaints near the center from many of the apprentices.

"What should we be looking for?" Smokefoot asked aloud. "Is there any evidence of the cats fur and such?"

"Tanglestripe and Sagelight both believe it is a bright red cat, as that was what they found in between Pineclaw's claws!" I stiffened, but tried not to give away my sudden fear.

Oh no, oh no, oh no! When did he get some of my fur? It must have been when he grabbed my tail when he was bleeding out! Mouse dung!

"I bet it was some Windclan cat!" Kindpetal hissed. I sighed in relief. The relief doesn't last long.

"Their is no bright red tom in Windclan" Moonwater, the second medicine cat, informed quietly. Kindpetal's ears turned red from embarrassment.

"Rushfire is bright red" Ravenclaw remarked, glaring at the red and orange tabby. "Him and Pineclaw also never got along"

"Rushfire was here in camp, he was playing with my kits" Skyleaf glared back at Ravenclaw.

"He was also with Kindpetal, Slatefoot, and I on a hunting patrol. We got back well before the border patrol would have made it that far along Skyclan" Puddlesplash added on, giving the upset black tom a sympathetic look.

"I would also like defend myself. Just because Pineclaw and I didn't get along doesn't mean I would kill him, he is my clan mate" Rushfire retorted.

"It could have been a rouge" Puddlesplash added in. He looked more confident before he realized he said something out loud and acted like he had nothing more. I have him a good job nudge, and a thank you nudge since that idea could save my tail even though he wouldn't get that part of the meaningful nudge.

"Who ever did this we need to be extra careful. It could have been a rouge or any clan cat!" Wishstar agreed with the silver and brown tom. Puddlesplash smiled at me softly because of the acknowledgment. I smiled back. "From now on no cat is to leave camp alone, especially the apprentices. Hopefully this was just a one off attack but until certainty is clear safety first. Now with that meeting is dismissed!"

"My mate and kits father is dead and that's all you can say?!" Dawndrop angry cry startled everyone. "I want this cat, who ever it is, brought to justice before Thunderclan!"

"Dawndrop we-" Wishstar tried.

"He was your kin too! You daughters son! Do you feel nothing?!"

"Dawndrop I grieve with you, I really do, but be reasonable unless this killer is stupid enough to try again, or to stay near Thunderclan territory what is the likelihood of us finding them?" Wishstar clenched her jaw.

"A random kill like this will happen again! Mark my words Wishstar if you don't take this more seriously will be grieving another!"

I tucked my paws closer to myself. *I hope I don't have to, but Pineclaw was causing tension between us and other clans... his antics have killed cats before... like your sister Dawndrop... my mother... it was because of the family relationship that Pineclaw got away with everything. Hopefully when I become leader it will be better.*

Chapter 4: Puddlesplash

"I can't believe Ravenclaw would accuse me of killing his son" Rushfire sounded frustrated but his green eyes swam with disappointment. "Do I look like I can kill Pineclaw!? I am so scrawny..." he half joked.

"He is just grieving, Pineclaw was his and Kindpetals only kit" I tried to comfort him.

"I don't think that's a good excuse"

"I know... I am just trying to cheer you up". Rushfire smiled at my words as I took a bite of our shared bird.

"You should really stop" he said jokingly.

"Make me then" I smirk. He looked ready to take on that challenge but stopped. His eyebrows furrowed as he watched something behind me. I looked around and saw it was Mapleclaw coming up to us. I smiled at my friend quickly.

"Hey Mapleclaw!" I say cheerfully.

"Hey," my red furred friend took a seat in front of us, "Can I ask for some advice?"

"Sure! What can I do for ya?"

"You have trained a successful apprentice, how do handle both battle and hunting?"

"You are the second cat to ask me that" I laughed. "I am guessing Mothpaw is struggling in one or the other"

"I can't get her to take hunting seriously" she sighed. "Do you got any advice"

"Take your time with her, you have to find a technique or skill that

fits her. It might find it she is more suited to hunting birds, mice, or squirrels"

"That... that actually is smart" she smiled at me gratefully. "Since we were trained in war times, I guess I never really paid attention to hunting just fighting" her smile dropped for a second before it picked up again. Mapleclaw stood up and began to walk off. "We have dawn patrol tomorrow don't forget!" She called back. Once Mapleclaw was out of ear shot, my mate chirped up.

"Look at the great hunter of Thunderclan" Rushfire gave me a proud grin as he took another bite.

"No I am not, I am just trying to be helpful" I gave him a nervous smile.

"Says only you" the red tabby gave me a comforting lick and continued to eat the bird.

"Thanks..."

"Hey Puddlesplash!" I recognized the voice and breathed a little sigh of relief. Skyleaf my old mentor came trotting up with a big smile. "Silverfeather is gonna take your spot on dawn patrol tomorrow and you were moved to dusk patrol"

"Why? And isn't Silverfeather nursing at the moment?" I was confused.

"Silverfeather has been feeling cooped up in camp and wanted some time away from the kits, this way she'll have the rest of the day to have fun with the kits"

"Ah," Rushfire snickered, "which means you'll be den dad for the morning"

"Silverfeather deserves a break" he gave a very tired smile, "four kits is a lot..."

"Ya think" the three of us laughed.

I missed this... hanging out with close friends plus my mate. Wish

Mapleclaw would enjoy times like this where you just talk. Her and Foxhop just keep on working.

"Anyway, those four will be apprentices soon and I wanted to spend some time with them before they do"

"Have you two decided on mentors yet with Wishstar?" I asked. "I was hoping maybe I would get to train one of them. I really like the idea of training either Forestkit or Firekit"

"You'll just have to wait and see" my old mentor winked at me. His blue eyes shinning with mischievous youth.

"I don't think I'll ever get an apprentice," Rushfire laughed a little, "even though I was taught everything a Thunderclan cat knows I am horrible at it"

"You aren't that bad" I protest.

"Did I catch anything today?" I rolled my eyes and smiled a little.

"You two should get some rest" Skyleaf advised, "tomorrow there are to be some big things happening"

"Ooo, a surprise quest?" Rushfire said thickly sarcastically.

"Heh, maybe?" Skyleaf winked again.

"His kits have another moon to go before they are apprentices right?" Rushfire asked, slightly nervous of what my mischievous friend was up to.

"Him and Applebrook always have something planned, don't worry" I inform. Trying to hold back my laughter was hard and just a little painful too.

"Your stifled laughter isn't helping" Rushfire smirked. He stood up and shook his pelt. "Let's get to sleep now, we better be prepared for what ever Skyleaf is planning". Rushfire buried the bones of our bird and led us to our nests in the warriors den. I took one more glance at the dull orange sky, smiling at the little white specks of stars.

Tomorrow will be better... I looked down as some of our clan mates prepare for Pineclaws vigil. My smile fell as I looked at the his still body in the clearing. *I know he never liked me, but he didn't deserve to die...*

"Puddlesplash?"

"Coming!"

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The forest was light and airy as I followed the path through the forest by memory. I felt so happy looking around and staring at the large oaks, the ferns I pass almost every day. My normal, mundane clan life. As I continue down towards the beech I felt something tugging at me and telling me to go back. It wasn't a voice, just a feeling that something wasn't right. I shook my pelt and continued. I could see the beech coming into view when I felt a stronger tug. This time I was forced to stop and turn around.

"Hello?" I ask the aloud to the forest. No one was there. The only answer was the rustling of the tree tops in the lake breeze. The tension of being watched cling to my body as I looked into the woods. *Someone is there, I can feel it, but who?* I turn around and continue back to heading to the lake. The minute my paws hit the pebble beech the water began to rise and turn red. I pinned my ears back and watched as the crimson surface began rising towards me. I panicked and quickly turned heel and ran back into Thunderclan woods. The water behind me sounded louder and louder as the ground shook. "Someone! Someone help me!" I called out as the woods began falling around me. The water began surging from my right as camp came into view. In horror I watched as the violent, red water swallowed up my home in giant surge. The water was now coming at me from all sides and out of instinct I began climbing the closest tree.
The water crashed against the trunk like claws on a cats pelt, trying to tear away and make it fall. As I began climbing higher into the tree the bloody waves hit the trunk of the oak hard and knocked me off my branch. In only a few seconds I hit the red water below with hard splash and gasped at how warm and slick it felt. I tried to swim to the surface, my paws flailing, but I just kept sinking.

Someone please help! Someone! As if my prayers were answered, something sharp pulled on my scruff and I felt the blood rush around me. My lungs burned as I craved air and the minute my head breached the surface I gasped. I slowly opened my eyes and saw a cats reddish brown fur but I didn't have time to recognize them as I was soon surrounded by weightless blackness. I could breath but I still felt like I was floating. "Wha-what is happening..." I said groggily as a float along.

"Blood of your blood will be spilled, and the darkness within the storm shall not be stopped until the lake is thick with it" I recognized the toms voice somehow but I couldn't put a name to it.

"Who-who are you?" I asked as I fought of the drowsiness. The toms voice didn't answer and I felt something pressing against my side. Like someone trying to wake me up. Rushfire's worries voice echoed through the empty blackness.

"Puddlesplash! Puddlesplash! Wake up Puddlesplash!"

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"Rus-Rushfire?" I groaned. My lungs hurt so much as I opened my eyes slowly. In my blurry eye sight I could pick out my mate, my brother ginger coat next to him, and Sagelights darker brown one next to Foxhop. On the other side of Rushfire was a my little silver brother Luckywish.

"Let's get him to Coldheart, he doesn't look too good" Sagelight murmured. I tried to lift my head but I just felt so tired. I was becoming a little aware of my surroundings, and realized quickly that I wasn't in my nest, much less camp. The cool mud under my paws.

"Puddlesplash can you walk?" Foxhop nudged my head. My brother voice sounded scared.

Did I do something? My paws and body felt tired and achy while my lungs still burned as if I was holding my breath. "Everything aches..." I groan.

"Foxhop, Rushfire, get him on my back" Sagelight ordered. A few paw shuffled around me in a blurry mess and then I felt someone grab my scruff. I couldn't even protest at the sharp pang in my scruff. I felt my paws front paws get moved over a very fluffy cats shoulders and then my behind shoved up. Sagelight grunted at the weight. "Luckywish, go tell Coldheart and Moonwater what happened and that we are bringing Puddlesplash back"

"Yeah!" He squeaked in a panic before running as fast as his little legs could take him. I felt myself smile weakly.

He came out of quarantine for me...

"I'll go with him" Foxhop said as I heard paw steps run off. I could feel Sagelight start moving underneath me. I couldn't help but start to fall back asleep but my mind panicked.

No! No I don't want to dream again! Please no! But my own internal pleas didn't get repaid by my body and I fell back asleep.

Chapter 5: Sagelight

I was moving pretty proficiently even with a cat on my back. As I carried my mates brother back to camp my mind filled with questions.

How did Puddlesplash get all the way out here? He just walked out with his eyes closed. Was he sleep walking? Why couldn't he breathe when we got there? Why is he tired? My mind flooded with questions.

"He fell asleep again" Rushfire sounded terrified. I glanced and saw him watching his mate with intense worry.

"He'll be fine" I tried to sound hopeful. Rushfire's expression didn't change.

"First Pineclaw, and now Puddlesplash is..." the red tabby trailed off.

He doesn't know what happened. I don't think I can even explain what happened...

As we got in view of the camp entrance, I was surprised to see a lot of cats there. Wishstar must have been pacing before Applebrook spotted us as she looked a little winded. Sparrowscar was looking at his paws and had lifted his head quickly as he heard our approach.

"Oh Starclan, is he still alive?" Wishstar asked as she raced up to meet us, Applebrook at her heels.

"What happened to him? Is he injured? Was he attacked?" Sparrowscar sniffed his son over looking between Rushfire and I.

"He is fine, he fell back to sleep" Rushfire answered, unable to make his concern.

"Coldheart and Moonwater are waiting. Once you drop him off you are all telling me what happened" Wishstar ordered.

"I'll help you Sagelight" Applebrook came to my other side and swung Puddlesplash over into his back. I relaxed a little but then followed Applebrook though the tunnel. Foxhop sat bellow the leaders rock looking anxious while Coldheart and Moonwater waited by the entrance of the medicine cat den looking alarmed. In camp, all the cats doing vigil were still asleep. Seems everyone is as able to stay quiet and discreet. As everyone followed behind us Sparrowscar turned to Luckywish.

"Go back to the nursery, Darkcloud will be wondering where you went" he whispered

"Are you sure?" Luckywish glanced back at Puddlesplash as Applebrook carried him into the medicine cat den. Coldheart was sniffing Puddlesplash as he was carried in.

"Yeah, your brother will be fine. Besides you need to stay in quarantine" Sparrowscar tried to reassure his youngest.

"Ugh..." Luckywish mumbled as he trotted off to his kits and mate in the nursery. Everyone flinched at the toms unknowingly cruel sigh.

It's not fair to send him away with Puddlesplash like this... what ever THIS is...

"The rest of you, my den, now" Wishstar voice was authoritative. We were all tired, but still followed our leader up the path and into her den. Foxhop and Sparrowscar joining us. We moved our way up to the leaders den quietly, and me hoping no one taking vigil has woke up yet. Even after entering and with the tendrils blocking some of the moon light, you can still easily pick out where and who cats were. Wishstar took a seat on her nest while Applebrook sat next to her. Skyleaf and Sparrowscar sat up against the rocky wall of the leaders den. The rest of us sat with our backs towards the entrance. I couldn't help but feel like we were apprentices getting in trouble.

No time for jokes Sagelight I scolded myself. Foxhop sat very close to me, wrapping his tail around his paws and trying not to seem upset, though his green eyes can't lie. I wrapped my tail around him to comfort my mate. On my other side Rushfire flexed his paws in

irritation. *He would rather be with his mate right now...*

"While we wait for Coldheart, can you three tell me why you didn't get anyone when Puddlesplash started acting weird?" Wishstar asked, now calmer.

"I thought he was sleep walking so I followed him to make sure he would be fine" Rushfire answered before Foxhop or I could. "Luckywish was just coming back from making dirt while Sagelight and Foxhop were on night duty. We really did think it was just sleep walking"

"Sleep walking isn't something he is known for" Sparrowscar pointed out.

"Puddlesplash isn't a normal cat" Foxhop mumbled. Sparrowscar looked at his paws in slight embarrassment.

"Alright, Puddlesplash doesn't seem to be waking up anytime soon so you guys better tell me what happened" Coldheart pissed off voice echoed behind us and almost made me jump.

"Coldheart, calm down" Wishstar calming mew attempted.

"I'll calm down when someone tells me why Puddlesplash smells like blood!" He hissed at his leader. The mother instincts in Wishstar's yellow eyes sparked for a second but she had more pressing matters.

"He-he smells like blood?" Foxhop eyes went wide. Coldheart looked angry still but his voice didn't match when he spoke to Foxhop.

"He doesn't have any scratches and the smell is extremely faint, I barely even picked it up, but I am very concerned as to what happened..."

"Care to tell us what happened?" Applebrook said encouragingly. Everyone watched us with hoping eyes, except for Coldheart.

"Well, I woke up to Puddlesplash groggily standing up. At first I thought he was getting up to go make dirt when I saw he still was asleep, or at least looked like it" Rushfire started. "So I followed him

out of camp to make sure he was fine, telling me and Foxhop what was happening on his way out" he added quickly. "Puddlesplash was heading to the lake and worried he might just walk right into the lake I tugged on his scruff but nothing happened, he just kept walking"

"So you couldn't wake him up?" Skyleaf looked at us quizzingly.

"Yeah, I tried again harder and this time he stopped and turned his head. His eyes were still closed and he went back to walking to the beach soon after that". I spotted from the corner of my eye Coldheart perking up a little, like that was something important. I clenched my jaw tightly from asking.

"What happened next?" Applebrook asked.

"The minute he put a paw on the beech he stopped suddenly" Rushfire pinned his ears back. "I could tell he was scarred of something even if his face was blank because he began running back to camp"

"This is getting weird" Sparrowscar mumbled. I had to agree internally with the reddish brown tom.

"We heard the commotion and came running to check it out" Foxhop added.

"When he got into sight of the camp he stopped again, and a few moments later he started climbing an oak"

"He climbed a tree in his sleep?" Wishstar sounded surprise.

I was when I saw him up there too.

"Yeah, but he didn't get far up when..." Rushfire stopped, cause if we said anything it would sound supernatural instead of real.

"What happened?" Coldheart urged. Foxhop looked away and Rushfire seemed to still be processing it.

"The tree started shaking violently, like it was getting hit by something large" I answered. It felt weird to say at aloud.

"It shook?" Skyleaf went wide eyed with disbelief.

"So that's what we heard" Wishstar murmured.

"The minute he fell from the tree stopped. Puddlesplash hit the ground hard. He wasn't breathing right and was flailing his paws like he was trying to swim..." Rushfire voice gave out.

"We started to panic..." Foxhop said just barely above a whisper. "Then suddenly he started gasping like he was able to get air and stopped flailing"

"Rushfire started to panic more and began trying to wake up Puddlesplash, which he did after a few moments of shaking" I looked at my leader with a mask of fear. "We-we didn't think that was going to happen! If we did we would have gotten you and-" Wishstar silenced me with a purr.

"It's okay, it's just concerning"

"What was he dreaming about?" Applebrook asked to the open air. He knew no one but Puddlesplash might know the answer to that.

"Hopefully when he wakes up he can tell us himself" Coldheart answered. I looked at the tom and had this gut this feeling he knew something.

"You three can go to your nests if you want, but you aren't to speak of what happened to anyone. It took awhile for the clan to get used to his pelt and with this sudden new... trait... it could stir people up into a frenzy" Wishstar excused us.

"I agree, Puddlesplash might not even want this known outside of cats he is close to" Sparrowscar spoke up. He glanced worriedly at Foxhop who nodded in agreement.

"Do you think this is related to Starclan? Is this a sign?" Skyleaf looked at Coldheart for an answer.

"I wouldn't know, but this would be one really weird war to send on. And to Puddlesplash? Thunderclan has two medicine cats and a leader who are capable of receiving signs well". Rushfire spoke up.

"Is it alright if I sleep with Puddlesplash?" Coldheart clenched his jaw.

"Fine love bird, but don't get in my way" the black fluffy tom growled.

"And you don't have to be on any patrols tomorrow too. That way you can be by his side" Applebrook added. At that we all left pretty quickly to our nests, hoping not to dream about a gasping Puddlesplash.

It kinda looked like he was drowning...

Chapter 6: Mapleclaw

Dawn had started to glow in the sky as I waited by the camp entrance for Iceeye to get up. Puddlesplash wasn't in his nest and neither was Rushfire when I woke up this morning.

Bet those two went prancing into the forest and are asleep out there some where. Mate stuff. I groaned stretched myself out. *Or Puddlesplash is already out for patrol... or avoiding it* I laughed to myself. Smokefoot, another cat who is on todays dawn patrol, was talking to a very tired looking Applebrook. *Bet it's sibling stuff...* I forced down a yawn as I blinked more sleep from my eyes. "I hate dawn patrol..."

"Same here..." Copperpaw yawned as he joined me by my side. Iceeye begrudgingly was dragging his paws as he followed his apprentice. "And Iceeye hates times twenty" he joked.

"Not funny," I grumble, "true but not funny"

"Where is-*yawn*-where is Puddlesplash?" Iceeye asked.

"Don't kn-" Smokefoot interrupted me.

"Puddlesplash became sick last night so he isn't joint patrol today". I perked up at this, actually stimulating me.

He seemed fine yesterday? What is going on?

"Oh, that is too bad" Copperpaw said, shaking himself to stay awake.

"Let's get on with this, today is a busy day"

"Oh goodie" Iceeye complained.

This is gonna be a long patrol...

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"Iceeye I swear to the stars above you complain one more time about your paws hurting I will wack you upside the head" I threatened with a growl. Copperpaw laughed and Smokefoot sighed.

"But they do..." Iceeye groaned. I whipped my head around and gave the tom a stink eye, which quickly shut him up. Pushing through the tunnel and into camp I saw how busy camp was. Many cats were talking while kits ran around playing. The hunting patrol, who arrived before us, were dropping prey off in the fresh kill pile. Wishstar was in deep discussion with Foxhop and Applebrook, which pissed me off a little.

Why is Foxhop so buddy buddy with them ? Does this have to do with Puddlesplash?

"Hey go and relax Copperpaw, you'll need to be energetic later" Smokefoot gave the thin black tom a happy smile and trotted off to go share tongues with Swallowtail, his mate. Our patrol scattered and I kinda just wandered over to a shaded area.

I'll take Mothpaw out so we can continue our hunting practice. But first I need to relax. I watched my clan mates do there normal thing and soon enough I spotted Rushfire waiting outside the medicine cat den. *Puddlesplash must still be sick.* I got up and trotted over to Rushfire. The minute Rushfire realized it was me he went from sad to sour quick. That made me pause but I continued. "Is Puddlesplash okay?" I asked genuinely, hoping the tom wouldn't mind my prodding.

"He is just under the weather, that's all"

"Yeah I know" I said sympathetically. He softened at that but didn't see, any better. He looked really tired. "You should go get some rest, you look like you died. I can watch over Puddlesplash if it's that-"

"No... no I'm sorry Coldheart doesn't want anyone except certain cats with him"

"Well at least go rest" I advised. "I bet Puddlesplash won't mind, I

bet he doesn't want you to get sick either"

"I would but he has been asleep for awhile so I want to be there when he wakes up"

"Well at least he is getting his beauty sleep" I tried to joke. Rushfire chuckled lightly at that.

"Is something wrong?" Foxhop the annoying asked. I held back a groan and turned my head to see the orange tabby glaring at me.

Of course the try hard would show up. Just when I am bonding with my best friends mate.

"Nothings wrong Foxhop" Rushfire said.

"Well, lets be quiet. Puddlesplash is sleeping and all this noise outside the den might wake him up"

"We want him to wake up" Rushfire growled. The two toms drowsily glared at each other with me stuck awkwardly in the middle.

I feel like I am missing something.

"I just told Rushfire he should sleep cause he looks tired" I tried to calm down Foxhop. The ginger shot me a dirty look.

"She is just trying to be nice Foxhop" Rushfire defended me. Foxhop grumbled something incoherently. He must have realized he wasn't winning this.

I love it when I get this far under his skin.

"All cats old enough to catch their own prey, join under highrock!" Wishstar called out.

Ugh... what now? I gave her my attention.

"While Petalpaw and Copperpaw hadn't actually completed their assessments, I'd say in honor of their father it would be right to make them warriors!" The crowd cheered. So,etching in me dropped

with disappointment.

That... that isn't fair! Why does Foxhop get an fully trained apprentice without a completed assessment!? This-th... I felt paws grow heavy with sadness and hurt at the unfair treatment and favoritism.

"Petalpaw! Copperpaw! Please step forward!"

"This is great! Foxhop's first fully trained apprentice" Rushfire sounded less tired.

Yay...

"I, Wishstar, leader of Thunderclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn." She looked at Petalpaw first, "Petalpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do" she said, shifting her dark gold paws so she looked taller.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Petalpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Petalclaw. StarClan honors your perfection and performance, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan".

I guess claw to honor Pineclaw . Great...

"Copperpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do!" He said happily.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Copperpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Coppernose. StarClan honors your dedication and promptness, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan"

"Petalclaw! Coppernose! Petalclaw! Coppernose!"

"Too bad Pineclaw didn't get to see this"

"I think it's good, he was such a brat that he would have complained about their names being so basic" I said allowed. I didn't mean for my bitterness to show.

"Mapleclaw be more sensitive!" Rushfire lashed his tail, "he died only yesterday"

"Don't act like he was a good cat, he was rude to you"

"I am being respectful for Dawndrop and their kits, they are all trying to be strong"

"Coppernose didn't seem that upset over his dads death"

"People are good at faking their feelings, you should try it sometime" Foxhop hissed. I rolled my eyes.

"Tell Puddlesplash when he wakes up I hope he gets better"

"Will do" Rushfire said. Something in his voice sounded distant and dissatisfied but I didn't care.

Chapter 7: Puddlesplash

The light was dim as I opened my eyes slowly. The smell of herbs and plants hit my nose with a gentle scent. As my eyes adjust to the dim dusk light I quickly realize I was in the medicine cats den.

"Ho-how did- oh wait" I quickly remember what had happened. As I slowly stretch my muscles I think to myself *How long have I been asleep?* No one was here at the moment so I sat myself up with a yawn. As I do so a cat pushed itself through the tendrils that cover medicine cat dens entrance lightly. In walked in a tired Rushfire with a ball of wet moss. He quickly saw I was awake and looked ready to cry. He dropped the moss and tackled me.

"You're awake! I thought you died!" He chokes and snuggled my head. I couldn't help but laugh and purr.

"I-I'm fine Rushfire"

"You scared me last night"

"Wait? I have been asleep all day?" I said raising my eye brows. "Aww mouse dung..."

"Hehe, yeah you have" Rushfire smile fell, "I should go and get Wishstar and Coldheart, they have a lot of questions for you..."

"Go and get them" I purr and lick his check.

"Moonwater was heading to the moonpool tonight so it's just the large cranky cat to take care of you" Rushfire joked. I rolled my eyes. "I brought the water for, I'll go get them now. He nudged my chin before leaving again. As I stared at the moss I felt a fear claw at my belly. The dream haunted me as I remember drowning in blood.

Did I almost actually drown last night? I push the idea down and began lapping at the moss. Soon after I finish with the wet moss

Rushfire came back with my leader and medicine cat. Wishstar looked relieved at seeing me awake, even if her yellow eyes were still worrisome. Coldheart has this mask of calmness that was obviously put up to keep the situation less stressful. Out of anxiety I pawed at the moss under my paws.

"It's good to see you awake Puddlesplash, I was getting worried" Wishstar smiled weakly. Coldheart nodded but didn't say anything. "I know you just woke up but-"

"You want me to tell you what happened..." I trailed off. She paused for a second before nodding. Rushfire licked my check and wrapped his tail with mine since my mate was trying to comfort me. I will say it did relax me, Rushfire being here.

"It seemed to have taken a toll on you physically, which is odd" she hinted my aches I complained when I woke up the first time. "If we know what you had dreamed of then it could help us figure out what happened"

"I think I was given a sign from Starclan" I murmur.

"A sign?" Coldheart finally spoke.

"Or maybe like a prophecy or a vision... or both I am not entirely knowledgeable on this kind of stuff" I looked at my paws. *Why am I so nervous?* I thought. *Because your worried they think you me crazy* I answered myself.

"Tell us everything from the beginning" Wishstar asked. I nodded and thought back to what happened.

"Well, I had dreamed of the forest and that I was heading down to the lake. As I walked along I felt something tugging on me," out of the edge of my eye sight I saw Wishstar's yellow eyes dart to Rushfire for a second. "When the second tug happen I stopped and turned around, I felt like I was being watched but I didn't see anyone"

"Rushfire had said he tugged on you cause he was trying to wake you up" Coldheart added. I looked up from my paws and smiled at

him as a thank you for trying. He smiled back. I gave my attention to my leader and medicine cat.

"I ignored it and continued on my trek..." I stopped when the images of the blood flood hit my mind like a paw strike and I actually flinched at the memory.

"Puddlesplash?" Rushfire leaned into me closer and closed my eyes to keep myself calm.

"You don't have to continue right now if it is painful" Wishstar sympathetically added.

"It-it's fine... I'm fine..." I stutter a little as I shook my head to get rid of the fright that tugged at me. "When-when I got to the beech the la-lake turned to blood and began to-to rise" I unsheathes my claws as the images came back again.

"Stuff of nightmares" Coldheart sounded sympathetic too. I bet Rushfire is surprised by the comfort in the black toms voice.

"I-I started running away..." I stopped and shuddered, "when I saw camp the blood crashed into it and swallowed it up..."

"So Thunderclan is in danger?" Wishstar sounded more alert and worried than before.

"All the clans are I-I think" I continued with the story of my nightmarish dream. "The blood started to surround me from all sides so I started climbing the closest oak. The blood hit the tree with such a force I fell in... and-and I couldn't breathe and-and I tried swimming and-and I-and I-" the fear was getting to me as I shuddered. The memory of my lungs burning for air made me scrunch up.

"You almost drowned in the blood" Coldheart finished the sentence for me. I looked at him with a clenched jaw and nodded.

"Some cat di-did save me-one with reddish brown fur"

"Who saves you?" Wishstar asked.

"I don't know, I was suddenly in darkness before I could see more". Wishstar seemed a little disappointed, but didn't discourage me.

"Go on, if there is more"

"There is, a toms voice began talking to me but I didn't know who it was" I looked outside, now fully dark with night, "the tom said 'Blood of your blood will be spilled, and the darkness within the storm shall not be stopped until the lake is thick with it'"

"That is definitely a prophecy" Coldheart sounded confident. He looked at his mother with spark of fight on his usually cold blue eyes.

"How can you tell?"

"It's obscure" he said, as if it was pretty obvious.

"So the clans are in danger again, but we just had a generational war. Would Starclan really make us suffer more?" Rushfire places a paw around my shoulder in protection.

"Starclan works in mischievous ways" Coldheart sounded annoyed, irate at our Starclan ancestors even.

"It sound more of a warning for Puddlesplash and how he can survive, at least to me" Wishstar said, looking at me. She saw how upset and tired talking about it had made me and she purred comfort. "I am sorry you went through with that"

"How did I end up in the woods?" The question had been nagging at me from the back of my mind. Wishstar looked at Coldheart who just shrugged.

"Rushfire will tell him if we don't" he joked just a little.

"You sleep walked out there, to the lake, running back to camp, up an oak. Everything you did physically in the dream it happened to you in real life" Wishstar said slowly.

"So-so that is why my lungs burned when I woke up..." I mumbled. *Great...*

"Your dream made an entire oak shake too" Coldheart added. His mom shot him a glare quickly. Wishstar must have wanted to keep that a secret for awhile.

"My-my dream made a tree shake?" *Like how the blood did I bet...*

"And your fur smelled faintly of blood" Coldheart kept saying. Wishstar lashed her tail out of irritation. He glared back at his leader. "He deserves to know, he could have a power for all I know"

"I-I Don't want powers..." *I am already weird enough...*

"I think Puddlesplash should rest, seems remembering it has shaken him" Rushfire came to my rescue. Wishstar looked at me, then Rushfire, than Coldheart, and than back at me. I was hoping she would agree.

"You are right, we can discuss this more when you are ready Puddlesplash" She bowed lightly and I bowed back. She took a warning glance at Coldheart before leaving. I laid down into the nest with a sigh. Rushfire curling up behind me to cuddle me. Coldheart made a fake gag before curling up in his own nest.

"Puddlesplash?" Coldheart said lowly. I turned my head slightly to see the black tom better. "What ever happens from now on isn't your fault"

"What do you mean?" I ask him, but he didn't answer. Coldheart just shifted his tail closer to him. I looked at Rushfire who was also confused.

Coldheart knows something more than I do ...

Chapter 8: Mapleclaw

"Mothpaw you are jumping too early, do you think you are a Skyclan cat?" I scold my apprentice. Mothpaw has attempted at least five times to catch something, and hasn't even gotten close enough. Mothpaw lay on the ground with her legs all jumbled up and sniffles.

"I am sorry!" She says as she slowly gets up, "I am trying!"

"Trying isn't good enough at this rate" I grumble. *First she steps too heavily, second she can't seem to keep herself down wind, now she can't jump right.*

"Is there another technique?"

"This is basic hunting Mothpaw" I grumble more. "Go hunt by yourself and see what you can do"

"But Wishstar said-"

"You'll be fine" I order. She looks at me weirdly before going off into some ferns. *Now I am finally alone.* I trot off in the direction of our Windclan border. As I walked I kept my ears pricked for other cats. *Don't wanna be scolded...* as I reached the border the sound of soft wind and a small running stream caught my ears. The sight of the small stream glimmering in the light was beautiful and the sight of the moors, in my opinion, were also very pretty. I stared, watching the moor for awhile. I sighed heavily, taking my eyes away from the scenery down at my paws. "I should be more patient with Mothpaw. She is trying... I-I just..."

"Mapleclaw?" I heard a she-cat. I turned around and recognized Petalclaw. She looked disgruntled at me as I sat here near the border. "What are you doing here?"

"I like listening to running water, it helps me keep calm"

"Oh really?" The golden she-cat wasn't convinced. I roll my eyes and go back looking at the moor. "You shouldn't have left Mothpaw by herself, with that killer running lose" she scolded. I whipped my head around quickly.

"And you shouldn't talk back to an older warrior!" I snap.

"I am a warrior too you know!"

"Since only yesterday, Petal*paw*" I emphasized.

"Ugh! That's why Mothpaw doesn't like you, you have such a temper" the she-cat sneered. A pain hit me emotionally.

"Say that again Petalclaw, and you'll end up where your dad is" I hiss out of spite. She flinched at my words but continued to glare at me.

"How do you even have an apprentice still..." The new warrior trotted off into the woods again, leaving me at the border alone. *Wait, she is complaining about Mothpaw being alone but she is!* I lashed my tail out in irritation. *She better be careful who she makes enemies with! Hypocrite...*

"I heard talking over here" I heard a Windclan cat.

Oops, the Border patrol is here. I scooted off into the woods before I would be confronted again by any cat. I headed back to where I was suppose to wait for Mothpaw. To no surprise she still hadn't turned up. I sigh and sat down waiting for her. *Riverclan cats can catch mice better than her* I thought.

***

As we walk back to camp I tried to mask my disappointment in my apprentice. She caught something clearly by accident. It was a very squished mouse hanging from her jaw, she wasn't even proud of her catch and I wasn't either. As we push through the bracken tunnel into camp, I immediately picked up yelling.

"You should come back home now!" I recognized the angry toms voice immediately. Hawkflight had made it to Thunderclan camp.

As I enter red into the clearing I saw Hawkflight standing there looking pissed. His mane and tail bushes up to an extra size. I pinned my ears back and growled.

Dammit Hawkflight!

"Dad I am sorry I didn't get to visit! I didn't even know that was the surprise yesterday! But I couldn't leave yesterday and I am sorry" Rushfire pleaded. Applebrook was on a patrol and Wishstar was oddly no where to be seen. Coldheart and Moonwater were collecting herbs.

Great... the only other cats in camp were the queens, Petalclaw, and Ravenclaw. None seemed to be willing to help, and Puddlesplash must still be sick cause I know he would be here by Rushfire's side. I wasn't gonna hold this against the queens either. "Mothpaw, drop of your mouse and go get Applebrook" I order her, "He should be at Windclan border"

"Okay!" She did as she was told and was soon racing past me back into the forest. I trotted up to hopefully be an intermediary.

"We are your family! Skyclan is your home! This is all just some romantic dream you built up in you head! Come home please" Argued Hawkflight as he spat. "Your mate isn't even here to even talk! Would you really want to be mates with a Thunderclan co-"

"Puddlesplash is sick dad, that is why I didn't even get to see you! Now please can you leave!"

"Hawkflight I advise that you leave, you are trespassing" I warn, standing between him and Rushfire. Rushfire made no objection to my interjection.

"No! Does my son really need Thunderclan cats to defend him! Rushfire we are going home!"

"I am home! I love Thunderclan and I love Puddlesplash!"

"Your living in a farce reality!"

"Hawkflight please leave!" I put a paw step forward to push him

back a little.

"Hawkflight? Sir?" It was Puddlesplash. I turned my head around to see him standing weakly next to Rushfire. He looked tired and wobbly on his feet, as if we drained of his energy.

Starclan dammit...

"Hawkflight I am sorry Rushfire didn't get to visit yesterday" Puddlesplash bowed. He almost tipped over but Rushfire supported him.

"Puddlesplash go back to the medicine cat den" Rushfire urged.

"I-I-" Hawflight only stuttered.

"Hawkflight can you explain to me why you are in Thunderclan camp yelling at my warriors?" It was Applebrook with his patrol, and he wasn't alone. Whitestar and Patchfur had followed them in.

Hawkflight is in trouble now. The red tabby pulled his ears back and looked at the ground in embarrassment. Hawkflights ears turning more read than his own fur color

"Hawflight..." Whitestar flicker his ears. The black and white tom was clearly irritated. Applebrook walked past Hawkflight swiftly and sniffed the half asleep Puddlesplash. He quickly looked between Rushfire and I.

"Can you two help Puddlesplash get back to his nest, will take care of Hawkflight"

"Yeah, on it" Rushfire said. I just nodded and placed myself on Puddlesplash's other side. As we walked with Puddlesplash between us and the older warriors arguing with Hawkflight, I get the biggest surprise. "Thanks, for just now" Rushfire whispered. I flicked my ear and smiled weakly.

"Trust me, my dad was just like yours. Argumentative, judgements, and definitely had an idealized life planned out for yours truly"

"Heh, yeah... I guess I am a disappointment"

"Not to this sleepy head here" I nodded at the tired Puddlesplash.

"I have the greatest supports ever" Puddlesplash said groggily, making a pun. All of us laugh at the horrible pun and we made out way into the medicine cats den. The warrrios of Skyclan and Thunderclan still arguing with Hawkflight.

Chapter 9: Sagelight

"I am happy Puddlesplash is active again, he was acting super loopy and tired after THAT night" I smile at Foxhop as we lay together in the sunlight.

"Yeah, him and Slatefoot went out hunting this morning" Foxhop mumbled, "I don't understand how Puddlesplash can keep up a relationship with his old apprentice, I tried talking with Petalclaw and she didn't want to talk!"

"It's is just Petalclaw, she is really rude to everyone now" I giggle a little. Foxhop purrs and curls up into my side.

"I hope you have better luck when you get an apprentice" me mumbled.

"I don't think I will get an apprentice. I am not as tallanted as the rest of you"

"What do you mean! You are amazing! Remember how you threw that Shadowclan cat into another during battle! You got super strength and are so intimidating and did I mention your strong!" He praised me, roughling my puffy fur playfully.

"Bet I could throw you" I teased.

"Hey I might be average but I got moves of my own"

"Hehe" We purred some more together. It was nice relaxing in the afternoon sun. I for one was very pleased that everything calmed down. I watched the clearing as Foxhop began to snooze off into my mane. Everyone was also relaxing for the day. Coppernose was flirting with Nightrain which made me laugh a little. Luckywish was playing moss ball with his kits. Of course they were far off to keep them away from any cat who might be carrying some disease. Darkcloud was talking with Moonwater while watching his kits with a glance every few seconds. It is just a nice day. As my eyes

dragged itself to and frow around the clearing I spotted Sparrowscar cuddled up in a shaded spot by the elders den. His cool blue eyes landed on Foxhop and me for a second. A warm ness spread in his eyes as we made eye contact, smiling at me. I smiled back genuinely as Sparrowscar went back to relaxing. He had this thick reddish brown fur that made him look like a dog instead of cat. His heavily scarred left side was what made him completely unique. I watched as he slowly stopped on something as he scanned the clearing, which thankfully wasn't me and Foxhop. His gaze went from a nice warmth to admiration and relief. Confused I followed his gaze and found myself watching a Puddlesplash as he shared a mouse with Rushfire. The two toms giggling a bit. *I mean it when I say it is nice to see Puddlesplash wasn't really affected by what had happened.*

"Oh, sorry Sagelight I fell asleep" Foxhop said with a yawn.

"It's fine" I grinned down at him.

"Oh hey! Puddlesplash and Rushfire are back!"

"Yeah, didn't notice till now"

"Oh! Before I forget! I found some really pretty yellow feathers today so I put them in your nest!"

"Foxhop you didn't have to do that" I purr and got up to follow him to our nest together in the warriors den.

"Of course I do! I am lucky I have a mate like you!" He joked and I couldn't help but giggle. *Such a romantic, what will I ever do without my Foxhop!* Foxhop stopped being cheerful and had a sour look on his face. Confused I looked where he was to see Mapleclaw and Applebrook talking.

"What do you think there talking about?" Foxhop grumbled, clearly upset at the scene before us. Applebrook was laughing at something Mapleclaw had said, who also had a small smile on her face.

"Don't know, but it doesn't seem to serious"

"Why does Applebrook like Mapleclaw so much... she is always rude

to other cats, she is quick to anger, and disobeys rules all the time" he complained. I nudged him gently to quit the negative talking.

"Mapleclaw was Applebrooks apprentice, they have a very close relationship"

"So?"

"So Applebrook just ignores those flaws, or at least calls her out on it when it gets to far. Just like Puddlesplash does with her" pointing out he is talking bad about his brothers best friend.

"I-I just don't want her to become deputy on the basis of nepotism"

"Applebrook is more likely to pick my dad or his own best friend if your worried about that. For all we know he might pick me" I joked. He loosened up at that. And for a split second he didn't seem upset. Only for the split second though.

"Oh and don't get me started on her relationship with her sister, Mapleclaw holds grudges like no ones business"

"Ugh..."

"Like, sure Orchidfrost was mentally unprepared to have kits especially when she didn't have a mate she refused to tell us who, but like Orchidfrost tried! She just got really depressed. It wasn't like Mothpaw and Cardinalpaw suffered in anyway since Branchtail and Dawndrop stepped up to take care of them!"

"Did you forget that Mapleclaw did too" I groaned. Foxhop glanced at me confused. I stood up and Foxhop ended up falling off my mane. He looked a little annoyed I got up but I gave him my serious look so he didn't want to complain. "Mapleclaw took care of Mothpaw and Cardinalpaw when Dawndrop got busy with her own litter. Branchtail and her both were the ones to clear out Orchidfrosts nest when it got musty, made she drank and ate, helped her kits get onto fresh kill early. We aren't on the inside of Mapleclaw and Orchidfrosts sibling relationship, we are on the outside trying to understand it. We all have complications going on in our own head. You have flaws too". He looked pissed off at me,

but held his tongue. Instead he stomped off to the warriors den, most likely to sulk. I sighed and looked around, hoping no one noticed that exchange. Puddlesplash was giving me a raised eyebrow but I shrugged and mouthed to him 'everything is fine'. The silver and brown tom didn't seem convinced but nodded and went back to talking to Rushfire. I sighed once more and laid back down in the sun, maybe to salvage what was left of my relaxation.

Chapter 10: Puddlesplash

Something prodded my side and I groaned.

"Few more minutes Rushfire..."

"It's not Rushfire" I quickly opened my eyes and stared up at my leader. Wishstar was standing in the warriors den looking down at me. Her yellow eyes were sullen and sorrowful.

"Wishstar?" I whispered, "what is wrong?"

"I want to talk to you alone, please" she then quickly and quietly left the warriors den. I stretched a little and quickly followed after her. My head quickly poked out of the warriors den into the comfortable air night. The sky was slightly glowing at edge. Confirming dawn was close. A almost full moon filled the sky at the very edge. I spotted Wishstar below high rock and trotted over.

"Is-is something wrong?" I said sitting in front of her. She sighed and looked me dead in the eyes.

"I have figured out part of your warning vision and thought it best to tell you now"

"You-you did?" I was surprised but relieved at the same time.

"I want you to keep an open mind please"

"Okay..." I raised an eyebrow. She took a deep, confident breath.

"You said that a cat of reddish brown fur saved you from drowning, and that the mystery voice said that blood will save you. I believe the prophecy involves Sparrowscar and you" Wishstar said slowly. I leaned back at the absurdity of this.

I guess it makes sense. Sparrowscar is my dad and is one of the phew reddish brown cats in Thunderclan. And we are related by blood. "I-I mean it makes sense" I whispered.

"He saved you from Mistdapple, he most likely will save you again"

"I-I- know that... Mistdapple thought I was a curse..." *I still have nightmares of that cat trying to drown me. I seem to constantly get drowned.* I tried to joke in my head. "What about the storm part? I mean if there is something out there that wants to kill so much"

"Do you have any quarrel with any cats? It could be someone angry at you" Wishstar asked gently again.

"No, I get along with almost everyone, even though outside Thunderclan. I have a lot of friends and acquaintances"

"Mmm..." Wishstar went deep into thought. It was quiet for awhile as she thought, I really didn't want to but I felt I had to.

"Wishstar?"

"Yes?" She looked at me like waking up from a trance

"Thank you" was all I could think to say. *I don't have much else to say...*

"For what?" the older cat looked up with a questioning look.

"You decided to tell me what you figured out immediately. You didn't try to trick me or hide anything"

"You are mature for your age, I can trust you to make mature decisions for yourself and this prophecy. Besides I get your mind has been running at Windclan speed since that weird night"

"You have no idea..." we laughed lightly. She slowly stopped and smiled softly at me.

"If you ever want to talk, I am here for you Puddlesplash"

"You always were..." I smiled back, "you always gave me advice I needed to hear"

"How do you want to approach the situation?" Wishstar asked. She continued after sitting up straighter, "With Sparrowscar?". I

clenched my jaw and looked distantly off at sone trees.

"Let's not tell Sparrowscar, it's only a theory and it wouldn't be wise to stress him out over it. Don't want him constantly lingering and such" I thought up.

"You are also good at making decisions. Ever thought of it perusing leadership roles more?"

"Oh Starclan no" I laughed nervously. "That's more Foxhops, Mapleclaws, and Darkclouds for-tell"

"Foxhop isn't very good at training apprentices though. I heard you had to help Petalclaw with hunting"

"Oh, so you found out about that..."

"It's my job to know what goes on in my clan"

"I am not in trouble for that am I?"

"No, I thought it was very respectful of you to keep your help discrete". She looked at the nursery with a cocked head and an idea smile. "Would you be willing to train Forestkit? She seems like she needs a mentor who can keep her busy"

"Oh! Yes of course!" I said a little too loudly. I stopped quickly and looked nervously around to see if I woke anyone up.

"Hehe" Wishstar laughed a little. "Good to hear, and before you go back to sleep what about Rushfire?"

"What?"

"Do you think he could train an apprentice? I know he isn't the best at Thunderclan things, to put it in his own words, but you could help him"

"Yeah, I think he could" I said truthfully. *I am not saying yes because he is my mate.*

"I think I'll give him Flykit. Flykit could use a mentor that can keep

up with his energy"

"You think so?"

"I am asking you"

"Oh- well umm..." *Rushfire is good at bringing cats out of their shells, that's what he did for me anyway. Maybe-*

"Think out loud Puddlesplash" Wishstar advised.

"Oh! Well you see-" I started stuttering, "Rushfire is really good at making cats feel comfortable... Firekit is-is a little nervous around any warrior so I think Rushfire should have Firekit"

"I see, to help Firekit feel more confident"

"Yeah! Like how you paired me up with Skyleaf. To bring me out of my nervous barrier"

"You are still nervous" she looked at me like 'yeah, I know you too well'.

"Yeah, well it's only around new cats... and when cats get upset"

"But Rushfire is different than Skyleaf, Rushfire is willing to speak his mind while Skyleaf is a little more thoughtful than loud" Wishstar added.

"Yeah..." *I don't like talking bad about Skyleaf, he was such a great mentor... Wait a minute-* "Why are you talking to me about this? Shouldn't you talk to Applebrook?"

"I can discuss what I want with who I want" she said in a mischievous way. "Now why don't you head back to your nest and I'll tell Applebrook and Coldheart what we discussed"

"Okay, good night Wishstar"

"Night Puddlesplash"

A lot just happened in a span of a short few minutes... I might get an

apprentice and my dad might be very important to the prophecy... but I wish the prophecy didn't involve us. Why us Starclan?

Chapter 11: Mapleclaw

"This patrol is going swimmingly..." I mumble to Mothpaw in a hall joking manner. She laughed a little at smiled. So far Petalclaw had slipped into the creek and got scarred by a bird. Darkcloud kept stopping to check every little plant so what shouldn't have taken about an hour is now taking more than that

"Hey, at least Petalclaw hasn't said anything mean yet"

"I heard that apprentice" the golden cat emphasized apprentice and glared at Mothpaw sharply. Mothpaw glared back challenging.

"Don't treat my apprentice like that" I growled.

"Can we please go five minutes without growling?" Darkcloud complained.

"Then tell Petalclaw here to stop acting like a throwing badger" I grumble.

"Then control your apprentice!" Petalclaw hissed.

"Can you please stop! Everyone!" Darkcloud stopped and turned around quickly. "We haven't even passed the Windclan patrol yet!"

"Sorry Darkcloud" Mothpaw said quickly. Darkcloud looked at my apprentice with appreciation and then continued along the side of the creek. As we walked along I heard the thumping of paw steps from the moor and looked over to see a racing rabbit with an apprentice chasing after it. The apprentice was a younger one, a brown tabby tom. He didn't even notice he was heading to the border. The rest of the patrol realized what could happen if the apprentice didn't slow down. I noticed the rest of the hunting patrol was behind, yelling at the apprentice to stop but he didn't.

Great! The rabbit had seen our patrol and tried to go around us as it crossed the border, but Petalclaw was faster and caught with leap

and a large chomp. The rabbit was still alive though and was kicking like crazy.

"Petalclaw!" Darkcloud protested.

"Wh-" she didn't get to finish as the Windclan apprentice came barreling into her, unable to stop at the speed he was going at. Petalclaw out of instinct scratched at the apprentice while the rabbit scratched her badly. The rabbit escaped but the apprentice quickly crossed over the border with whimper.

"Hey, are you okay?" Mothpaw asked the Windclan apprentice as his hunting patrol arrived. The tom has a bad scratch from Petalclaw on his shoulder.

"I'm so so sorry!" He apologized as he licked wound.

"What in Starclan name Thunderclan!" Growled another tabby that I despise so much. Ferretflight was a short but long legged tom with dark green eyes. Another much darker brown tabby tom with bright aquamarine eyes, one of Puddlesplash's friends, Mudstripe, quickly got between Ferretflight and my patrol.

"It was an accident Ferretflight" Mudstripe advised.

"What do you mean an accident! He scratched my eye!" None of us took the time to see if she was alright, and I think she lost an eye. Her right eye had a scratch going from one end to the other, covering part of her face in blood.

"That was the rabbit" Ferretflight hissed. Mudstripe glared at him quickly.

"I am sorry, do you need assistance or-"

"No! I don't need assistance from Windclan scum!" Petalclaw screeched before running into the woods. Mudstripe sighed and sniffed the Windclan apprentices wound.

"Heronpaw do you need help?"

"No I just feel really, really bad..." he looked at his paws nervously.

Ferretflight snarled at us.

"Shouldn't you have told him to stop?"

"We thought he had seen us" Ferretflight glared at me and flicked my tail, trying to hold my snarky comments. A burning hatred filled me as I watched Ferretflight. *Mouse heart... couldn't even be bother to see Mothpaw and Cardinalpaw... or actually take responsibility... don't know why Orchidfrost protects the dead beat...*

"Go and check on Petalclaw, me and Mothpaw will finish the patrol" Darkcloud ordered me,

"I am not leaving her" I grumble. His stern glare didn't flinch and I felt pressured. "Alright fine..." I stalked off but I felt worried. *I hope Mothpaw doesn't figure it out. Her and Ferretflight look so physically similar that she might put two and two together.* Orchidfrost told me when she got pregnant who the father was, and hate Ferretflight for it. *First I have to take care of Petalclaw.* I followed her scent slowly and soon realized Petalclaw didn't head to camp in the right direction. *Perfect...* I followed her scent to the training hollow where she sat licking her paw and rubbing her head frantically, trying to get rid of the blood soaking half her face. The golden she-cat quickly realized I was there and hissed.

"What do you want Mapleclaw?" She hissed. I sighed at the hostility.

"Look we need to get you back to camp so Moonwater and Coldheart can check your eye"

"What's the point!? I can't see anything out of it!" She cried out. "What are my clan mates gonna think of me? I am useless with just one eye!"

"No you are not, you can still see out of the other one can't you" I tried to sound caring. She shot me a blazing glare.

"Why didn't you defend me!? Attack the apprentice!? Argue back!? I am blind because of that stupid furball!"

"Petal-"

"The next time I see that lowlife Windclan murdering scum I am gonna tear both his eyes out and feed them to him!" She growled so lowly and threateningly it made me jump a bit. I stared right into her hatred filled hazel eyes and something in me churned. It was the same look that Pineclaw gave when Pinestripe had that accident by the border and died. And Pineclaw actually kept his word and killed the Windclan cat he blamed, sending us back into war with Yellowstar

She... she is gonna cause another war just like... just like... all I could think of us all the death. *Mom, Dad, Gingerpaw... I lost so many... we all lost so many... I-I can't let it happen again.*

"Mapleclaw?" Petalclaw leaned back as she watched me. She was suspicious of my panic stare and eire quiet. Something in me snapped.

"Your dad said the same thing once, and look where that got him" I said slowly as I eyed her. "It took us seasons to end the war between Thunderclan and Windclan. Everyone lost someone..." I stopped and looked away from her.

"What are you getting at?" Petalclaw hissed again.

"I lost most of my family because your dad killed another cat out of vengeance, your father caused an entire war between all the clans and got no penance! None because he was Wishstar's grandson" I spat, looking at her with fiery anger that the she-cat flinched. "An eye for an eye..." I smirked. Petalclaws one eye was confused, than she put two and two together. Her one hazel eye went wide with fear and fury.

"You... you killed Pineclaw!" She cried.

"He died because he caused that war!" I launched myself at her before she could react, biting down hard onto her neck. She quickly began squirming under my body, but soon her movement became slower and slower. The flood of her blood on my mouth made my eyes go wide with delight. Her blood poured down off her neck and onto the training grounds sand, staining it red. Petalclaw went limp in my mouth a few moments later and I let her body dropped onto

the sand. I licked my bloody mouth and looked her in the eyes. Petalclaws hazel eyes were already glazing over with death as she stared solemnly past me. "And now you won't hurt anyone you fox-heart" I said smoothly. I felt horrible inside but I shoved the guilt deep down and walked off towards the lake. Once my paws hit water I dunk my muzzle into the water and washed it off. Petalclaws blood drifted in the water for a few seconds before fading away into the lake water. The only evidence left of my actions was her golden, lifeless body. My scent will also drift away in the wind, like her blood in the lake. "You can't hurt anyone..." I mumbled into the waves. Realization kicked in and I began to choke up at what I had done. Petalclaw might have been awful but she was my kin. *She was so young... why did she have to be so much like Pineclaw?! Why?!* I started to cry softly.

Chapter 12: Sagelight

I was crouched, ready to pounce on the quail just lumbering around and occasionally pecking at the ground when sudden crashing scared it off. I grumbled in frustration abs looked over to see Foxhop scared for his life. Confused I and a bit panicked I was gonna ask what was wrong but he got to it first.

"Petalclaw was found de-sigh-dead at the training grounds. Snappaw and Springpaw found her first when they ran ahead of their mentors...". My eyes went wide with shock before concern for my younger sisters took hold. "Are they at camp? Are they ok?"

"Yes they are fine but we gotta go to camp, every cat is freaking out right now" I nodded a d followed my Nate quickly. My mind running frantically as my paws did beneath me.

First Pineclaw died now Petalclaw, his daughter, is dead. What's next is Starclan gonna rain fire down from above?! Oh I can't believe Snappaw and Springpaw had to find her... they don't need to see that kind of scene. I out paced Foxhop and got to the camp entrance despite he head start. We huffed as we were slightly out of breath and quickly entered. Even as we entered I could hear the audible cry and screaming of Dawndrop, Petalclaws mother, coming from inside the hollow. Unlike when Pineclaw died, her yelling wasn't from anger but from sorrow and grief. Inside everyone was panicking, checking loved ones, sending cats to collect patrols, and setting up search patties to find the killer. I spotted Dawndrop in the middle of camp as she clung to her daughters lifeless body. Coppernose was off to the side keeping his youngest siblings away from the body. I heard one ask a question that tore my heart in half.

"Is sis with dad now?" Sycamorekit asked Coppernose. I watched the tom pull his ears back and a few moments later nod his head softly.

"At least daddy won't be alone now" Flutterkit said as Coppernose pushed them into the nursery.

No kit should be saying that, no kit should have to see kin drop like flies... We quickly moved to the side as cats flooded back into camp confused and scared. Looking back at Petalclaws body her hazel gaze was focused lazily on something in the distance and her golden chest was dark red with blood. She had scratch over one eye, staining her face with blood as well.

"Petalclaw..." Foxhop trailed off, unable to finish his sentence. I sighed and purred to him to try and make him feel better.

"You did a great job training her"

"Not good enough since she couldn't even protect herself..." Foxhop mumbled looking down at his white paws.

"Foxhop don't blame yourself" I order slash encourage. He didn't respond, just continued to look at his paws. Darkcloud and Mothpaw came in and were shocked to see Petalclaws body. *She was on their patrol, but where is Mapleclaw?* As if to answer my question she wasn't that far behind them, looking as confused and uncomfortable as we were.

"You had something to do with this!" Dawndrop saw the three and hissed. "You're the reason she is dead!"

"What happened?" Darkcloud looked around for answer.

"We found Petalclaws body at the training grounds," Applebrook answered, "wasn't she with you guys on patrol?"

"Yeah, but she got scratched on the eye by a rabbit a Windclan apprentice chased over" Darkcloud said, looking at Petalclaw with great amount confusion. "I sent Mapleclaw after her to make sure she gets back to camp"

"Mapleclaw?" Applebrook turned to look at his past apprentice.

"I tried to get her back to camp but she lashed out at me, screaming and calling me a coward for not attack the apprentice or defending her. I told her she needed to see the medicine cats but she screamed something incoherent and ran off." Mapleclaw said. "I wanted to follow but with her in that state I was a bit afraid she would lash

her anger out on me" she clenched her jaw and looked at Petalclaws body with regret and sorrow.

"You three are to blame!" Dawndrop hissed, "You shouldn't have left her alone! Especially you Mapleclaw! She was injured and angry and you just left her out in the woods alone, with her fathers killer still out there?!"

"I am sorry, I am to blame" Mapleclaw bowed politely to the grieving mother. "I should have ignored her words and tried to get her back to camp" the red cat tried to not choke on her own words.

"Your apology can't bring my daughter back" Dawndrop growled lowly. Tears were streaming down the creamy gingers face as she attempted to kill Mapleclaw with just her gaze. Foxhop's words made me jump.

"Of course Mapleclaw was there" he grumbled lowly. "I hope she blames herself as much as I do".

"Foxhop..."

"Well, Rainstripe will prepare for her vigil tonight" Wishstar came out of no where. The old tortoiseshell she-cat looked tired as she looked at Dawndrop with sympathy. "We are all sorry for you Dawndrop, you and your kits have lost too much recently"

"I told you you should have done something! Anything! I knew the killer would strike again but no cat believed me! Now I have to bury another kit, another loved one! All because of all you mouse hearts!"

"Will find out who killed Petalclaw and Pineclaw, I promise you Dawndrop" Applebrook spoke up. He's usual mellow and optimistic personality replaced with one of righteous confidence. Dawndrop gaze went back to Mapleclaw as something clicked in her head.

"Mapleclaw has red fur... and both my mate and kit were killed when she was out of camp" everyone's eyes went wide with shock as cats glanced between the queen and the warrior. Mapleclaws hazel eyes looked pained by the accusation and she took a step back

from the crowd.

"I was out hunting with Mothpaw on the day Pineclaw died" she stated, she sounded ready to cry herself. Dawndrop eyes softened, only a little of course, before looking down at her daughters body with anguish.

"You are still at fault, if you hadn't left my daughter alone I would still have her here"

"I know... and I will blame myself for it to the grave"

Chapter 13: Puddlesplash

[image]

"You sure you want to do this?" Rushfire asked me. The two of us were placed on a dawn border patrol with Applebrook and Sparrowscar. Applebrook was brought up to speed on everything by Wishstar and what she had told me, and decided he was gonna spend more time with me. 'Gotta support my favorite cat!' he had said with one of his goofy supportive smiles when we talked. But today I was put on a Skyclan border patrol. I hated doing it cause I always seemed to have the worse luck. Hawkflight was always on patrol when I was.

"I am totally sure!" I said a little too confidently that it kinda sounded fake. *Starclan help...*

"Okay" Rushfire gave me a small smile and licked my forehead. We walked off to where Sparrowscar and Applebrook waited by the entrance. None of the apprentices were allowed to leave camp so many were groaning and being bored. Sparrowscar was looking distantly off and hadn't noticed us approach.

"Hey guys!" Applebrook greeted cheerfully. Sparrowscar turned his head and smiled with joy

"Hey Puddlesplash, it's been awhile since we went on a patrol!" Dad chirped.

"Yeah, it has been awhile" I smiled back.

"Ready to go?" Applebrook made it seem a general question, but it was directed definitely to me.

"Yeah" I said quietly. No one else said anything and we left soon after. We headed for the Skyclan border in silence. I finally lifted my head from looking at the ground to see Rushfire was walking next to me, with Applebrook in front with Sparrowscar by his side.

"So far so good?" Rushfire whispered in my ear. I nodded at him and smiled weakly. Applebrook tried making conversation and it wasn't good.

"So Sparrowscar have you gotten to meet Luckywish and Darkclouds kits personally yet?" the deputy asked, though the answer was very obvious that it could have swiped and clawed his nose.

"Yeah..." Sparrowscar said softly, "I can't believe I am seeing the next generation already. I feel extra old now" We laughed lightly.

"When will you two be having kits?" Applebrook asked me and Rushfire. I glared at the cream tabby and Rushfire tensed up.

"We-ask Puddlesplash" Rushfire said looking away from me. Applebrook turned his attention to me. I visibly tensed up more and clenched my jaw.

"Well... Umm-we are planning on one day having kits but-" I started. "I am just not ready to..."

"Applebrook, I feel that was... inappropriate to ask them" Sparrowscar mumbled in my defense. I felt thankful dad had my back. Applebrook gave an embarrassed smile.

"Sorry..."

"But again, we do want some we just haven't had time"
I looked at Rushfire with a look of 'will talk about it later'. Sparrowscar looked around and smiled softly before quickly looking ahead again. I felt less anxious as I walked behind him. We had reached the border without saying anything more and began doing the normal thing. I tensed up again. *No Hawkflight, no Hawkflight, no Hawkflight please...* I repeated in my head. As we walked along, marking as we went, we soon met up with the Skyclan patrol. I tensed up even more and pulled my ears back as well as Rushfire, but he added a fluffed out angry tail. On the Skyclan patrol was Ashbreeze, Leafybush, and Hawkflight. My skin burned as I felt the red tabby glare at me. Rushfire quickly pushed himself into me and glared at his father as he glared back.

"Hello Applebrook" Ashbreeze said respectfully. The other two Skyclan toms watched Hawkflight with mild concern. "It is good to see you again Rushfire"

"Hi Ashbreeze! Leafybush!" Rushfire ignored his father, which sparked mild infuriation in the other toms yellow eyes.

"Hi!" Applebrook smiled. "Didn't expect to run into you guys so early on the patrol"

"Yeah, Dewmist had us leave a little earlier" Leafybushs older and more raspier voice sounded sad. This fed a little of my curiosity but I didn't have the guts to push.

"Is something wrong?" Rushfire asked. He couldn't help worry for his old clanmates.

"We-"

"It doesn't concern you" Hawkflight said in spite, interrupting Ashbreeze. The two Skyclan cats glared at Hawkflight quickly.

"He was just asking" I defended my mate but I quickly regretted my actions.

"He isn't a SKYCLAN cat" Hawkflight hissed. I felt myself tense up more. Ashbreeze made an audible warning cough for Hawkflight to knock off. The red tabby didn't care though. "Your the reason Rushfire doesn't live in his own clan, you abom-"

"Leave him alone" it was such a deep and surprising growl that I actually jumped a small bit. I looked over and saw Sparrowscar glaring at Hawkflight like a challenge. His lip pulled up in a small snarl. Applebrook and everyone was surprised.

"Let's just calm down, it was nice talking to you guys!" Applebrook said quickly before coming around us and shoving us out of sight of the Skyclan patrol. Once we were he looked at Sparrowscar disappointingly. "Were you trying to start a fight?" Sparrowscar didn't say anything but shrugged a little, suddenly back to his calm demeanor. I watched him closely, feeling gratitude fill my mind.

"Th-thanks..." I muttered. Dad turned around and smiled big at me.

"No cat talks to my son like that" he purred. Applebrook went from being angry to a happy little smile. As we continued down the border Rushfire spoke to me.

"Sorry about my dad" he whisper quietly.

"You don't need to apologize for him" I whisper back.

"I know, but I should have defended you"

"You didn't have to, I have dealt with worse" I licked his check and he smiled softly at me.

"I don't deserve you" he gave me a lick back and my heart swelled.

"Oh god I want to cuddle you two! The love between you two is so contagious" I laughed at Applebrooks comment.

***

I had spread myself out in the shade as the heat of the day started to increase. I felt like I was slightly turning to rot under the heat, Rushfire laid near me but was also clearly uncomfortable.

"I might rot in the heat" he joked.

"Yeah" I said as I yawned. We laid there in silence for a few more minutes before he spoke up.

"You know how you said we want to have kits" Rushfire started, eyeing me for a reaction. I felt my checks heat up and I looked away. "Were you serious about that?"

"Look, I have been thinking and maybe we could but..." I trailed off.

"But what?"

"There is so much going on! Sparrowscar! My weird dreams! The warnings! And soon will-" I stopped for a second, "and Wishstar is considering us for mentors for Skyleaf and Silverfeathers kits"

"Oh... OH!" Rushfire looked a little surprised but his expression softened. "Can-can I be honest with you?"

"Of-of course..." I mumble.

"If we did have kits I would want to be the den dad"

"Real-really?"

"I am not a great Thunderclan cat... really I am surprised Wishstar is considering me for an apprentice" he laughed a little. "But I know how much you love mentoring, and me being a den dad wouldn't keep you from what you love doing"

"But you don't like being cooped up in camp"

"Yeah, I don't. But I could take patrols and night shifts so then I would still be doing my duties"

"Are-are you sure?" I whimpered. He purred and leaned over to lick my forehead.

"Of course I am sure" he smiled again. "I am happy you wanted to talk about it, it has been a touchy subject for awhile"

"I don't want kits right now but of course I do want them some day..." I mumbled.

"Maybe after you and your soon to be apprentice get into a grove"

"If I get one"

"Than after that!" Rushfire said proudly. "I would cuddle with you, but it is too hot for that"

"Hehe, yeah" I laughed. I spotted Skyleaf watching us with a gleeful look in his blue eyes. *What has him so happy?*

"All warriors old enough to catch their own prey, join under high rock!" I quickly put two and two together.

Oh flying fox! I really didn't think they would be made apprentices

today! Me and Rushfire moved out of the shade and into the crowd, many already talking about what is gonna happen.

"Skyleaf and Silverfeathers kits are six moons" I heard Whiteleaf hint. Slatefoot has found himself by my side and smiled at me.

"Hey!" the silver blue tom greeted.

"Hi Slatefoot" I said back. Slatefoot nodded at Rushfire before looking forward to watch our leader.

"Today I make new apprentices! I mean, the nursery is quiet full" Wishstar jokes a little and the crowd filled a murmur of laughter. I noticed Dawndrop was off by the side looking miserable and I felt pity for the Queen.

She had lost her daughter and now is watching an apprentice ceremony only a day after Petalclaws death. I would be unhappy and slighted too...

"I call forth Flykit, Forestkit, Firekit, and Fallenkit!" Wishstar called out. I watched as the four kits tried to look responsible and walk forward reasonably, but Flykit was basically hopping all the way to the front. I thought I could hear Silverfeather sigh tiredly at her eldest son while Skyleaf laughed. Wishstar addressed Flykit first and looked kindly down at the light brown tabby. "Flykit from this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Flypaw. Your mentor will be Smokefoot. I hope Smokefoot will pass down all he knows on to you". Smokefoot, a dark grey tabby, moved forward through the crowd and sat down next to Flypaw. Wishstar continued, saying "Smokefoot, you are ready to take on another apprentice. You have shown yourself to be patient and dutiful. You will be the mentor of Flypaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to him". Smokefoot nodded and touched noses with Flypaw, who could barely hold in his excitement.

Great match! Smokefoot is a great warrior too! I smiled. Wishstar turned her attention to the silver and white tabby called Forestkit.

"Forestkit from this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Forestpaw. Your mentor will be Puddlesplash.

I hope Puddlesplash will pass down all he knows on to you". I froze for a second before walking forward with a proud shove from Rushfire.

Oh yes! I get to mentor again! I cheered in my head. I sat down next to the she-cat who looked up at me with joyful, round, green eyes. I couldn't help but feel over-joyous too.

"Puddlesplash, you are ready to take on another apprentice. You have shown yourself to be helpful and a talented hunter. You will be the mentor of Forestpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to her" I smiled at her and touched noses with my new apprentice.

"I'll make you super duper proud!" She whispered. I couldn't help but smile even bigger.

"Firekit from this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Firepaw. Your mentor will be Kindpetal. I hope Kindpetal will pass down all she knows on to you" I moved back into the crowd slightly as I watched the golden tabby walk up and site by the nervous tom.

This will most likely be her last apprentice... she is getting up there in moons...

"Kindpetal, you are ready to take on another apprentice. You have shown yourself to be proud and strong cat. You will be the mentor of Firepaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to him" Kindpetal and Firepaw touched noses before Wishstar's gaze fell upon the youngest of the litter, Fallenkit the all white she-cat. "Fallenkit from this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Fallenpaw. Your mentor will be Slatefoot. I hope Slatefoot will pass down all he knows on to you"

Oh yes! Yes, yes, yes! I don't think I could have felt more prouder in that moment for my old apprentice. Slatefoot passed me by with a quick smile before sitting down next to Fallenpaw.

"Slatefoot, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from Puddlesplash, and you have shown

yourself to be responsible and generous. You will be the mentor of Fallenpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Fallenpaw" the two young cats touched noses and the crowd of Thunderclan cats soon began cheering for the new apprentices.

"Flypaw! Forestpaw! Firepaw! Fallenpaw!"

I think things may start to look up!

Chapter 14: Mapleclaw

"There you go Mothpaw!" I applaud as she had pinned Cardinalpaw quiet quickly in our mock up move session.

"Now Cardinalpaw, try it on Mothpaw" Ravenclaw asked. Mothpaw got off and got into a attack crouch position. Cardinalpaw eyed her littermate for a second before quickly moving to the side as Mothpaw leaped at her. The black tortoiseshell launched herself at the grey tabby and pinned Mothpaw. Cardinalpaw looked up smiling confidently and Ravenclaw nodded an approval. "You two are very excellent fighters"

"Will we get our assessment soon then?" Cardinalpaw asked in triumph, getting off her sister so she could stand up.

"Not yet," I stated calmly "there are still plenty of things to learn".

"Aww come on!" Cardinalpaw groaned and Mothpaw couldn't stop herself from giggling. "The apprentice den is so crowded now that we have all of Skyleaf and Silverfeathers kits in there!"

"And Flypaw kinda snores" Mothpaw giggled.

"Well it's no better in the warriors den, have you heard how loud Iceeye snore? You could hear him all the way at the Island" I joked. Ravenclaw sighed but couldn't help but smile too. We all stopped laughing and Ravenclaw stood up straighter.

"Alright, we should do some hunting before we head back"

"Ugh..." Cardinalpaw groaned before following her fluffy mentor into the woods.

"Do we have to?" Mothpaw asked.

"Yes" I stayed firmly with my apprentice. "You have yet to catch anything properly"

"But I have caught stuff!" she argued.

"What you call hunting I call luck, now let's go see if we can catch anything" I lead my apprentice into the woods away from where Ravenclaw and Cardinalpaw.

"I want to hunt by myself" the gray and brown tabby stated. I turned on her quickly and gave her a raised eyebrow.

"There is a rule stating you all can't be by yourself, no cat is"

"But I hunt better by myself" she mumbled. I flicked my tail and weigh the options. She looked nervous and uncomfortable even asking. I sympathized and decided enough was enough.

"How about we just go back to camp, you have been working yourself hard enough and maybe you deserve a break" she brightened up at that. Disappointment still swirled in her eyes but she seemed genuinely happy. The two of us walked back to camp quietly.

***

I was on the edge of camp with Smokefoot checking over the camp walls.

"I don't think you'll need to pull anything out, but I'd say we should at least patch some of the holes" Smokefoot said with a gesture to some.

"Yeah, do you want me to grab Mothpaw and will head off to collect some bracken?"

"Yeah, at least for now. We might need to check on the dens too. Wishstar might want to think about expanding the Warriors den by next green-leaf with the surplus's of apprentices"

"Mothpaw and I will be back with that bracken, and I'll mention the expansion to Applebrook"

"Alrighty, I'll keep looking for more holes and dead branches" I left the dark grey tabby to do his search while I went off to look for my

apprentice. Looking around camp I didn't immediately spot her. Confused I went to check the apprentice den but Springpaw was leaving the den anyway.

"Is Mothpaw in there"

"Nah, just me collect and replacing old moss"

"Do you know where she went?" I ask the grey speckled she-cat.

"Umm... let me think... uh-ya! I do remember seeing her following Puddlesplash and Forestpaw out of camp"

"Why?" I raised an eyebrow at that.

"Don't know, though I remember Forestpaw being excited about hunting so maybe something to do with that". I clenched my jaw at that, a little dismayed at the idea of Puddlesplash seeing Mothpaws terrible hunting skills. I stalked off leaving camp, Springpaw calling out to me "Your Welcome!". I went quietly through the forest as I didn't know if she would be stalking anything when I would find her. I traveled over the leafs and twigs quietly, but if you were actually listening for me you could hear me. As I followed Mothpaw's scent I picked up talking ahead.

"-that way it is easier to judge the distance between you and your prey" I recognized Puddlesplash's voice.

"Wow! That does make it easier! Thanks a lot Puddlesplash" my apprentice said in cheerful appreciation. I paused my walk as realization hit me.

Is-is Mothpaw asking Puddlesplash for help? I did ask him for some tips so did he think I needed his help? I felt bubbling rage fill my chest. *He is teaching my apprentice! That will make me look bad!* I burst through a few more bushes following the sound of the laughter to find Puddlesplash sitting off to the side with Forestpaw. Mothpaw must have done a leap cause she was a bit farther away. "What are you doing?" I demanded in a low hiss. Puddlesplash was completely surprised to see me and Forestpaw pinned her ears back as she was startled. Mothpaw eyes went wide when she realized how much

trouble she could be in.

"I was just teaching Mothpaw a cool trick for hunting" Puddlesplash said a little confused and startled himself. Surprisingly he didn't stutter from nerves.

"She is MY apprentice Puddlesplash!" I hissed. The silver and brown tom flinched at the statement, pulling his ears back.

"He was just trying to be helpful!" Mothpaw tried to defend him. I shot her a glare and she went quiet. Looking at her paws in embarrassment.

"She-she asked me for help and I didn't see any harm in it" Puddlesplash stuttered a little.

"Yeah! Your just being rude!" Forestpaw piped up

"Keep out of warrior conversations apprentice" I hissed at the silver and grey she-cat. I turned to face my apprentice "We are leaving, now!"

"Bu-but-" she tried protesting. I glared even harder and Mothpaw flinched before hanging her head in disappointment. I started leading her back to camp as I shoved my anger deep down. Puddlesplash didn't try to say anything, but I thought I heard Forestpaw ask 'what is her problem?'.

How could he teach MY apprentice! Her issues are mine to deal with! I don't need him helping! Starclan above why does Puddlesplash do this!? He just has to be SOOOO helpful.... that fox heart can't help himself half the time!

"Mapleclaw?"

"I taught you all you need to know! You don't need to accept help from some other mentor!"

"I just watched Forestpaw catch a squirrel and a black bird already, so I asked him to give me pointers!" Mothpaw defended him. I stopped and turned on her quickly which she took a few steps back.

"Maybe he should be your mentor than?! If he is so great!" I yelled. Her eyes went round with hurt, before blazing into righteous anger.

"Maybe Puddlesplash should be! You always send me off by myself instead of helping me! Then you act all disappointed but you don't try to see what I did wrong! Forestpaw is already ahead of me, and she was made an apprentice three days ago!" Mothpaw stormed off back to where Puddlesplash was, and I felt burning frustration eat away at me.

"He is a stuttering coward! Good luck with Puddlesplash" I yelled after my apprentice. I stormed off to camp not feeling that I should chase after her now that she is Puddlesplash's apprentice. *Good luck with that fox heart! I don't know what anyone sees in him?! He barely stands up to anyone, much less talk!* There was a break in the branches above and I saw a storm cloud was starting to pull in. It was large and dark in color. It looked angry almost. "Great, now it's gonna rain. What do you want Starclan, to punish us for our own stupidity?" I huffed and yelled at the sky.

Chapter 15: Sagelight

Foxhop is on a rampage...

"I don't understand how Mapleclaw could have yelled at Puddlesplash like that?! He was only trying to be helpful!" My mate kept yelling the same things over and over again as he paced in front of me. We were at the top of the stone hallow because I really didn't want cats knowing our business.

"I mean, Mapleclaw is quiet proud-full. It might have hurt her feelings to know her apprentice went to another cat for help" I tried to reason.

"It doesn't make any sense Sagelight!" He stopped and looked at me pleadingly.

"Look, I agree that Mapleclaw shouldn't have yelled at Puddlesplash, but you have to still understand where she is coming from too. You might have had help from him but Mapleclaw didn't ask"

"Puddlesplash is being a kindhearted! Not once has he ever stepped out of line! Not once has he ignored another cats frustration! He just wanted to help Mothpaw cause she asked" He yowled with a stomp of his foot. At the a large gust of wind nearly blew us over. Looking over a dark cloud had blown across the sky, already darkening most of the territory.

"We should head back down before we get blown off" I stated calmly.

"Yeah your right..." he calmed down and looked a little less angry, still frustrated though.

I wish Forestpaw didn't go blabbing about this to us and Skyleaf, it just brings in more cats than it's worth. Distantly towards Skyclan territory I spotted something bright and flickering. Confused I stated at the

orange light for a bit before realizing what it was.

"F-Foxhop?" I stuttered

"Yeah?" He sounded quizingly. He followed my gaze and quickly saw what I saw. "Mouse dung! The tree is on fire!" He yelled. Several trees on our border were caught on fire. The embers spreading with the strong wind and pushing further into Thunderclan territory.

"The fire is spreading! We need everyone to get out of camp!" I quickly yelled. We raced down the small path and into camp, almost tripping over our own paws as we did. The faint smell of smoke had already started to spread into camp, carried most likely by the powerful winds

"Does anyone smell smoke?" Darkcloud asked, sniffing the air more. Wishstar had existed her den at the faint smell.

"Wishstar!" Foxhop yelled. The black tortoiseshell turned her head quickly to us as we stopped on the path. "There is a fire! On the border between us and Skyclan!"

"Oh Starclan, Everyone!" Wishstar turned and yelled louder than I have ever heard. "There is a fire! All cats need to get to the beach! I need a few cats to go and look for our hunting parties and border patrols stat!"

"I'll go find Puddlesplash and his group since they went out again!" Rushfire called out. Without waiting for an answer I saw the red and ginger tabby run off into the woods.

"I'll go get the Windclan patrol!" Darkcloud head butted Luckywish before racing off as well.

"The medicine cats were off getting herbs! I'll go find them!" Kindpetal quickly turned to her apprentice. "Get to the beach Firepaw, and help the queens" Kindpetal bolted out in search of her brother and Moonwater.

"I'll go and get the Skyclan patrol!" Foxhop yelled before I could protest. My orange tabby mate smiled at me before running off to

find the patrol.

"Alright! Everyone else let's get to the beach! Grab a kit if you can!" I watched as many cats quickly grabbed prey and I saw Silverfeather rush into the medicine cat den and grab as much herbs as she could. I ran all the way down and started comforting Luckywish.

"I'll take a kit" I said picking up Blizzardkit. He didn't yelp but whimpered.

"I don't wanna die" he whimpered. I purred and it seemed to calm him down a little, but he was now crying at the idea of fire. As I looked down, the only kit there was Jaggedkit. Luckywish must have noticed to and began to panic with him.

"Has anyone seen Minnowkit!" He yelled. Wishstar went wide eyed and looked around.

"Mouse dung! We are missing a kit! Minnowkit!" Iceeye came running up to us with fear in his ice blue eyes.

"What do you wanna do?" He asked Wishstar. By now the fire was in obvious view over the camp wall and the smell and sting of smoke made my eyes water. Wishstar looked at Iceeye, then Applebrook who came running up, then back at Luckywish who looked ready to cry as he searched for his daughter.

"I'll stay and look with Luckywish for Minnowkit" Wishstar ordered Applebrook, "You get everyone to the beach, most have already left by now except for us". She was right, everyone but us and the kits had left.

"You sure?"

"It is my duty as leader to keep my clan mates safe" Wishstar said valiantly. Applebrook wasn't too sure about his leader's decision. "Now Luckywish, let's find Minnowkit!"

"I got Jaggedkit" Sparrowscar came out of no where and picked up the spiky black tom-kit. I nodded and the four of us raced out and into the woods. The fire by now was like raging cat, and clawed at

us from our left as we raced to the lake beach. The smoke stung my eyes and the heat from the fire latched onto my pelt like teeth. Then suddenly, as if cold snow was thrown at me, the lake breeze hit us. We looked up and down the beach, quickly spotting our clan mates a little ways down. I quickly spotted Darkcloud, with the patrol he found. Darkcloud saw we had his two of his kits and sighed a little, but his yellow eyes were still overly concerned.

"Where is Luckywish? And Minnowkit?"

"Minnowkit went missing as we all went to leave camp" Iceeye said sadly.

"Luckywish and Wishstar stayed behind to look for her" Applebrook added. I dropped Blizzardkit and Sparrowscar dropped Jaggedkit. Both tom kits raced over to their father in fear.

"Daddy the Fire was really hot!"

"Luckywish will be fine, right?" Jaggedkit asked.

"I need to go back! I need to find my mate and daughter!" Darkcloud tried to rush back into the blazing forest but Iceeye tackled him.

"You need to stay here! You have two sons to watch over right now!" Iceeye hissed. It hurt to hear the kits pleading for their father to come back. I wrapped my tail around them and watched as Darkclouds head whipped from the forest and back to his kits. The pain in his yellow eyes hurt as he dragged himself over and behave to cuddle his kits. I stepped aside and let him silently cry over the possible loss of Luckywish and Minnowkit.

"Sagelight!" Foxhop squealed as he collided with me, behind I saw my dad with relief but concern.

"Snappaw went back to look for you!" My father choked, "and your mother got separated from us". Darkclouds head lifted and he started weep more. My eyes went wide at the thought of my younger sister and mother still in there. Smokefoot and Springpaw looked sadly into the fire, my dad holding back his own crying. The

entire woods were on fire now, no one is gonna live through that. I glanced over at Skyclan to see their woods also engulfed, along with Shadowclan.

"Look! Windclan Moore's are on fire!" Branchtail yelled out. We all turned to see the dry grass lands a blaze as well.

Oh Starclan no...

"How many cats are missing!?" Applebrook asked the crying and wheezing groups of cats.

"We are missing Kindpetal!" Ravenclaw cried out. My ears pinned as I looked at my paws.

She went looking for the medicine cats, who are here. She must still be looking for them...

"Snappaw and Swallowtail are still in there!" My father yelled out. He was pretty stoic at the moment for how much heart break he may endure if they don't survive.

"Minnowkit, Luckywish, and Wishstar are in camp..." I said lowly. Foxhop looked at me with wide eyes.

"We-we need to go back and get him! I can't lose my little brother!" He started to run back towards the woods like Darkcloud tried but Puddlesplash came bolting over and pinned Foxhop.

"Are you crazy!?" the silver and brown tom yelled at his older littermate.

"But-but Luckywish is still in there!"

"I know! But I can't lose you too..." Puddlesplash trailed off, clearly choking. I couldn't watch the scene and I closed my eyes.

This can't be happening, this can't be happening, this can't be happening... I thought I could hear the cries of cats from all clans as they mourned early for their missing family, friends, clan mates. The storm above finally opened up and swiftly I was drenched I rain. We all watched as the fire slowly died from the on pour of

rain. I could hear murmurs of hope that maybe the missing were able to survive with the rain coming down, but they were only just murmurs.

Chapter 16: Puddlesplash

I was just numb. We carefully walked along the territory looking for any of our missing clan mates, but we all knew it was futile. The ground was soaked with an ash and rain mixture. It kinda looked like leaf-bare, except it carried more tragedy than anything. Smoke still billowed lightly from certain areas as we walked to what was camp. The light drizzle above being the only comfort for my clan mates and I.

Please... please...please be alive.

"Kindpetal! Any cat!"

"Snappaw! Swallowtail!"

"Wishstar!"

"Luckywish! Minnowkit!" It made me flinch hearing

"Puddlesplash come here" Rushfire said. I looked back and my mate looked at me with mourning look. He had sat down and had uncurled his tail. He knew I needed a cuddle. I walked over and pressed my head into his chest and just started crying. The clan just continued on, slowly leaving Rushfire and I alone in the charred derby. Once I was sure no one stayed behind I cried softly.

"I-I!" I cried, the mourning in my voice causing me to choke unable to finish my sentence

"Puddlesplash you did alright"

"I-I should have went back to camp with Foxhop! W-wh-hic- why did I stop him! Maybe we could-hi -could have gotten to-"

"Puddlesplash you know deep down you wouldn't have" Rushfire said calmly. I wanted to argue with that, but in the back of my mind the thought of reason prevented he so I just cried harder.

"I-I failed..."

"You didn't" Rushfire purred softly and held me tighter.

***

Night had taken hold of the sky by the time everyone had search the burnt renains of the forest. They found Luckywish, Minnowkit, and Wishstar's body in the medicine cat den. They weren't burned but it must have been all the smoke. Luckywish was in the way back of the den standing over Minnowkit while Wishstar was found closer to the entrance. Snappaw, Swallowtail, and Kindpetal were no where to be found and many already came to terms that we weren't going to find them. We laid out who we could and took part of the vigil for all six. Darkcloud couldn't even bring himself to look at Luckywish's silver body, much less Minnowkits. It hurt everyone to see a kits body out in the open right now, we all felt exposed. I kept myself distant from the vigil, I was more focused on trying to feel something. Ravenclaw was still hoping to see his mate Kindpetal return while Smokefoot was trying to be there for his other younger kit, Springpaw. Sagelight and Foxhop had curled themeselves up together as they laid in vigil. It hurt everyone.

"All warriors old enough to catch their own prey, join under high rock!" Applebrook called out.

"He wants to call a meeting now?" Tanglestripe groaned, but he quickly bit his tongue.

"We have lost many cats today and-"

"Kindpetal is coming back!" Ravenclaw yelled. The black tom was still holding on to hope. I just lazily looked over but said nothing. Rushfire came over and sat next to me, looking worried but I couldn't care less.

"-and I know many of you are worried about the lack of protection and prey! But Skyleaf and Mapleclaw found that the forest beyond stone hallow was untouched so we can collect bracken and re-build camp quickly tomorrow!" Many cats murmured in just small delight.

"Coldheart also said no one is suffering from smoke inhalation!"

"That's good" Rushfire said with a nudge. I still didn't respond, just nodded my head.

"I-I know this is way to quick... just after we lost Wishstar... but I do have make a new deputy of Thunderclan before the high moon" Applebrooks wires rang true no matter how much no one wanted to hear them. He stood up straighter and began the ceremony "I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirit of Wishstar and our fallen clan mates may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Thunderclan is Skyleaf!" Now I perked up. I scanned the clearing and spotted Skyleaf looking surprised that his best friend would announce him as deputy. Skyleaf shook his head and walked forward and stood next to Applebrook.

"I accept your offer and promise to serve Thunderclan as deputy" Skyleaf bowed and the crowd cheered solemnly.

"Skyleaf! Skyleaf! Skyleaf!" I could feel my numbness drift away a little and felt happy for my old mentor. I saw Mapleclaw from the corner of my eye looking displeased by the choice of deputy but seemed content not to protest. Applebrook ended the meeting with a flick of his tail and Skyleaf nodded and took action.

"I know it's late everyone, but let us at least set up cats to collect bracken tomorrow! Those who I asign to dawn patrol won't have to!" Skyleaf quickly beckoned Tanglestripe, Sparrowscar, and Neville over.

"Wow, he has this already taken care of" Rushfire said.

"Yea-yeah..."

"Let's go check to see if he needs us to do anything, alright?" Rushfire nudged me up on my paws and I followed him towards Skyleaf.

"Hey guys, you two should be resting up" Skyleaf glanced at he with concern. "Shouldn't you want to be in the vigil?"

"I-I don't feel mentally upset for that..."

"I understand"

"Do you need us to do anything now or tomorrow?"

"If you two aren't gonna be part of the vigil do you mind helping Coldheart set up some moss for the queens and kits? They'll be sleeping in the medicine cat den tonight"

"Sure, come on" Rushfire nudged me again and I followed. Before I even entered the medicine cat den I heard Dawndrop talking.

"I told them something awful would happen if the didn't solve my families murders. Starclan has punished us for not ta-" I stopped dead in my tracks, turned tail, and stomped off. A sudden, burning hatred rose in me and I had no idea where I was going but far away from that. Rushfire called out to me but I ignored it.

I-I just want to be alone...

Chapter 17: Mapleclaw

Where is Mothpaw? I thought as I looked around the territory past stone hallow for her. Applestar, originally called Applebrook, has everyone busy as to not dwell on our slowly healing old territory. *It's only been two moons but yeah, it still has scars.* There hasn't been a gathering because so many clans were busy repairing and healing but everyone is anxious to know how the others are doing. Except for Riverclan, much from what I have heard through the patrol vine the fish eaters have been bragging about not getting hit by the fire. "Mothpaw!" I yelled.

"Here!" She yelled back, I followed her voice and found her standing triumphantly over a squirrel she caught. "I used Puddlesplash's technique he taught me" she said with a mocking tone. I grumbled a little but said nothing towards the remark.

"Come on then, let's get back to camp" I slowly led her back down to our perfectly new camp. The camp walls were stronger than originally as a few hungry foxes tried to attack us but they realized it wasn't worth it pretty quickly. The camp was barren, with only the queens, leader, and few relaxing warriors inside. No one wanted to be near our old forest, or in camp for that matter. Rushfire and Puddlesplash were talking to Coldheart and I couldn't help but feel anger bubble in my belly again.

"I'm gonna drop this off" Mothpaw said blankly with the squirrel in her mouth. I held my tongue and watched as she wandered to the fresh kill pile.

"Mapleclaw!" Skyleaf came bounding over and once again I had to bite my tom as to not insult my deputy.

"Yeah?"

"I need you to take night watch tonight, I forcing Darkcloud to sleep"

"Alright, I'll take watch" I said. The white and brown tabby smiled gratefully at me.

"Thanks Mapleclaw!" Skyleaf said and wandered away to talk with some other warriors. My eyes wandered back to Puddlesplash and Rushfire as they seemed to be having a serious discussion. Puddlesplash looked less miserable today, but still tired looking.

I guess that is good... maybe he is finally airing his feelings I reasoned a little. I remembered how I yelled at Puddlesplash for being a coward and for helping my apprentice, and regret hit me like a rock slide. *Why did I yell at him? I know I was angry, to be honest I am still jealous now, but Mothpaw is doing much better just after one talk with him... and he is going through a lot. I don't think my issues should be something he should have to fix. If I apologize it might make him less depressed maybe?* I sighed deeply and walked over to Puddlesplash, now that the two mates had finished talking with Coldheart. "Puddlesplash, can we talk?" I asked. My silver and brown friend turned his head and looked a little surprised.

"Oh, umm..." he looked back at Rushfire and he shrugged. Puddlesplash followed me to a secluded area away from listening ears.

"I wanna apologize for how I acted. You were just trying to help and to be honest I was just jealous you got Mothpaw felt more comfortable asking help from another cat rather than me. I would understand if you-"

"It's okay Mapleclaw, I should have asked you for permission first" he interrupted. His voice was low but still kind.

"No really Puddlesplash you didn't do anything wrong" I insisted, which took him by surprise. "I really was just lashing out in jealousy and frustration. You are a good cat, an amazingly kind cat, please just take my apology and roll with it. It's not like you usually take them when you should" I laughed. To my own surprise he laughed too. It was the first time since Luckywish's death that he actually looked happy. He glanced at he and smiled.

"Thank you, I-I needed that"

"No problem, and hey I know you have Rushfire and your goofy brother but if you need another pair if ears I am here for you"

"Can I give you some advice?"

"Umm sure, what is it?" I said, raising an eye brow.

"You should apologize to Mothpaw too" he looked at he with real determination. "She blames herself for you lashing out, and I have noticed she has been extra snarky with you. It is a bad idea to have a strained relationship with you apprentice when still training her, obvious I know, but I know you want to still have a relationship with her afterwards". I sighed.

"I know, it's just that we are both so stubborn and snarky" I aired out. "Mothpaw wants to prove herself to me yet wants to constantly challenge me, or argue with me yet clings to every words I say as if it's a prophecy from Starclan".

"She both admired you and acts like a moody, rebellious apprentice" he added on.

"Do you really think she will accept an apology?"

"Yes, and if not you can just try and rebuild the trust from the ground up" he patted my head, "it'll just take longer that's all". He got up to leave and gave me one last grateful smile. "Thanks for everything, and hope my advice helps ya"

"You better or I might make you take over night watch" iI joke threatened. He gave me a mischievous grin before wandering off. Following Puddlesplash advice I hurriedly went off in search of my apprentice once again. It was easy to find her as she didn't get far, she was sitting outside the apprentice den looking a little bored. She spotted me approaching and her tired expression soured.

"What do you want now? More training already?" Mothpaw said with a lot of tone once I reached her.

"No actually, I wanna apologize" her green eyes went wide with confusion and surprise.

"Wait what?"

"I realize now I was trying so hard to make you the perfect warrior that I didn't think about the amount of pressure and work I was putting you under, not realizing it was my fault you were behind. And then when I heard you taking hunting tips from Puddlesplash, I lashed out all my frustration at myself towards you and him". There was an awkward silence between us before Mothpaw finally spoke.

"Maybe I shouldn't have been so dismissive about my less than adequate hunting skills, I just thought if I made up for it in other aspects you would ignore it. But when you didn't and started to criticize me hard on it I felt less than and pressured to preform as well as Slatefoot or Puddlesplash"

"I guess we are jacking in the communications part of our friendship" I laughed. She laughed too and quickly put her head on my chest.

"I-I just wanna make you proud of me" she said softly.

"I am, I really truly am proud of you"

Chapter 18: Sagelight

I heaved myself back into my paws that felt so sore I wanted to collapse again. *It has been like this for a moon. Just feeling lopsided and uncomfortable. I get tired so quickly and just really upset. What is wrong with me? Mmm... maybe it's a stomach issue? I have been holding off visiting Moonwater and Coldheart the least I could do is go now.* I started walking towards the medicine cat den and felt the same irritable heaviness again. *Ugh!* I got to the medicine cat den and pushed through the short tendrils. As my eyes adjusted to the light I called out. "Moonwater?"

"Yeah?! Oh hi Sagelight!" She said cheerfully. Once my eyes adjusted I saw the dark grey tabby looking at me with curiosity. "Is something wrong?"

"Yeah, I haven't felt like myself" I complained, coming into the den and sitting down.

"Describe how you feel" Moonwater said as she put some herbs away.

"I feel tried all the time and my paws get really sore really fast. I just feel bloated" Moonwater perked up a little and turned around.

"Oh? How long has this been going on for?"

"Maybe a moon, thought it was just something I ate originally, but I guess it isn't entirely that"

"Mmm" Moonwater came up and lifted her paw slightly to my belly. "May I?"

"Su-sure?" I said, a little confused. She placed her paw on my belly with some pressure. She looked like she was feeling for something. She lifted her head up quickly and looked up at me smiling.

"Oh Sagelight! Congrats!"

"On what?"

"Sagelight, your pregnant" She said giving me the biggest smile. I went wide eyed and my mouth opened a little.

"I'm-I'm pregnant?" I stuttered.

"Yep! And I am guessing your a moon along from what you told me!"

"I-I am pregnant?!" I screeched even louder.

"Oh Starclan, that was loud" Moonwater shook her head.

"I-I gotta tell Foxhop! He'll be so happy! Flying Fox dung I am pregnant!" I pulled Moonwater into a heavy cuddle. She laughed and smiled.

"Smokefoot will be so happy, his first kit having kits of her own" she said into my mane. I let her go and put on a big smile.

"Ye-yeah... I wish Swallowtail could be here"

"But hey! Your pregnant! Want to wait here and I'll bring Foxhop and your family so you can give them the good news?"

"Yes! Oh thank you Moonwater!"

"For what?"

"I thought I was sick and dying" I joked a little and she shook her head at me jovially

"Hehe, okay wait here and I'll get everyone" she left the den and I looked down at my belly. I put a paw up to it and smiled softly.

I'm gonna have my own kits, with the tom that I love in the clan I call home. I really can't believe it!

"Sagelight?" Foxhop's voice echoed in my ears and I quickly put my paw down before his eyes adjusted. Moonwater led my mate, Smokefoot, and Springpaw into the medicine cat den. Moonwater

sat next to me and kept a straight face while I struggled to.

"What is wrong?" Smokefoot asked with worry in his tone.

"It's nothing bad, it's great news actually!" Moonwater smiled.

"Huh?" Springpaw with quizzing green eyes.

"Sagelight?" Moonwater looked at me with a big smile.

"I'm pregnant!" I said so loudly Moonwater shook her head again. At first it was utter silence, the shock of the news. Then Foxhop came over and softly butted heads with me.

"I am-am gonna be a dad?" He choked up. I purred loudly and smiled even bigger.

"I know it is sudden but-"

"I'm gonna be a dad!" He said even louder. Smokefoot came over and wrapped my tail around me as he purred.

"Swallowtail would be so proud right now" he said, choking up himself.

"Maybe I'll get to mentor one!" My sister said, placing a paw on my stomach. "You hear that! I'll be great to play with so grow up fast!" We all laughed and cuddled together. Moonwater left the medicine cat den to give us some privacy even though she really didn't have to.

"Oh! I have to tell Puddlesplash and Sparrowscar!" Foxhop squealed before running off to find his brother. We laughed again and my dad purred a little.

"You two will make great parents"

"I hope so" I laughed nervously.

"Hey! What names will you pick?" Springpaw asked.

"Umm"

"Springpaw really?" Smokefoot sighed sweetly.

"You picked out my name before I was born, at least that was what Sagelight said"

"That was because we thought we were going to have one kit our second time, and ended up with two"

"How many do you want?" Springpaw asked me. She was so sad about Snappaw that was nice to see her smile.

"I want two, three or four would be a lot to handle" I said nervously. "But I don't care as long as they are healthy"

"Sagelight!" Puddlesplash came bounding in with Foxhop behind him. "What's wrong?! Do you need Moonwater? I just saw her by the prey pile!" Puddlesplash panted. I looked at Foxhop with a look of confusion. He shrugged lightly and smiled even bigger.

"I am gonna be dad!" Foxhop said with a happy smile. Puddlesplash was still panting but smiled still.

"I-I hate-pant-running-huff"

"Sparrowscar?" Smokefoot asked.

"Out on-huff- out on patrol" Puddlesplash placed his tail on his brothers shoulders. "Dude, you made it seem like she was dying"

"Foxhop..." I glared at him.

"I told him he needed to come quickly, it's really important and Sagelight needed him"

"Oh Starclan..." Smokefoot sighed heavily. Springpaw giggled as I gave my mate a shock of horror.

"Oh... sorry..." Foxhop gave Puddlesplash an apologetic glance. The silver and brown tom rolled his eyes and gave me a big grin.

"Really congrats you two" he pulled his brother in in a surprise hug before shaking his head. "Just when she goes into labor don't make

act all sorts of panicked and crazed alright?"

"He will be" Smokefoot gave my ginger mate a knowing look.

Chapter 19: Puddlesplash

I felt prodding in my side and groaned. "What...?" I said blinking my eyes open and looked up at a blurry Rushfire. "Something wrong?"

"Come on, I want to show you something" he gave me a mischievous smile. Confused I got up with a grumble. I followed my giddy mate outside. He flanked my side once I hit the warm air of green-leaf end.

"What is this about?" I mumbled.

"You'll see" he grinned again and lead me up the path to the top of stone hallow. He seemed so jittery and excited by something so he was definitely up to something. We finally made it up the stone hallow but he didn't stop, Rushfire continued to lead me into the woods. I flicked my ear in confusion but followed. As we made our way through the woods something made me pause. With my pelt pattern I always got stared at when at gatherings, so kinda gained the sense of when some cat was. I was getting that sense now.

"Rushfire-"

"Shh! We are almost there" he gave me a joyous look. He continued walking. I gave the woods a quick glance around and buried the feeling deep down.

Maybe it's just a bird or something. Rushfire stopped in front of a bramble bush and was trying really hard not to bounce around.

"Go inside" he nodded at the small entrance. Giving him a look of suspicion I pushed my way in. The bramble throbs tugging lightly at my pelt. Once I made my way through it was just a hidden field of sorts surrounded by bramble bushes. Rushfire followed me quickly in and gave me a big smirk.

"Rushfire... it's just grass" I was truly confused now.

"Watch this now" he moved through the grass and that was when little bugs started flying up into the air, flickering with a slight glow in a indecisive pattern. They fluttered into the air. It was really adorable to see how excited Rushfire was by fireflies. As he gave me a big goofy grin. "Isn't this so cool?!"

"It really is" I gave him a sincere loving look. Rushfire's ears turned red with embarrassment before brushing his tail widely and causing more fireflies to fly into the air. He was so genuinely excited that my heart skipped a beat just watching him. I followed him into the middle of the small clearing a he rolled through the grass causing even more fireflies to buzz around. Rushfire stayed down watching them fly around and I laid down next to him, purring loudly.

"You are such a goofball"

"Yep, I am your goof ball, forever" he teased before giving me a lick on the check and snuggling into my chest. We watched the fireflies dance against the dark outline of the trees and the night sky. We slowly dozed off just watching the yellow lights.

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"Psst" I heard lightly, thinking it was Rushfire I ignored it. I was happily sleeping. Instead he got louder. "PSSST! Puddlesplash?!"

"What Rushfire?" I groaned pulling my head up and blinking the sleep from my eyes. I looked around and quickly spotted that Rushfire was still sleeping. Confused I looked around and spotted something that sent a shiver down my spine, glowing black eyes with green pupils just watching me from the brambles. "Wha-who?"

"Shhhh! You don't want to wake up the mouse brain do you?!" I recognized the voice just as the tom left the darkness of the bramble. Pineclaw emerged, his black and golden tabby pelt had a transparent look to it. His concerning eyes giving me weird signals. What terrified me the most was the just gash along his neck, it bleed profusely with black blood and soaked his chest entirely,

On a more concerning note, how in the name of Starclan is he here?! I knew someone was watching us! He has black eyes, like in the stories about the dark forest! I knew he was a jerk but I didn't think he was that

much of a jerk!

"Look before you freak out, I may have black eyes but that doesn't mean I am evil evil. You know what I mean right?" He twitched his tail nervously. Realization hit me like raging badger.

Is he... nervous? I stood up and gently moved away from Rushfire as to hopefully not wake him. I looked back at the once Thunderclan warrior with worry. "Pineclaw are you alright?"

"I-I just need to talk to your technically I am not supposed to be here-"

"Obviously" I gave him a comforting smile and he seemed to loosen up a bit at that.

"Heh... yeah..." he said looking away before shaking his head and looking back up at me. "Anyway I need to warn some cat, any cat, and I had a feeling you might be the only one willing to hear me out. I mean based on my appearance most cats are gonna jump at the chase to tear my neck open"

"Warn me about what?"

"There is something going on in the dark forest. Like big issue kind of big, like the nursery stories"

"Oh?" *Is the in connection to the prophecy?*

"There is this small group in the forest scheming something up, like it has to deal with the clans but I didn't hear much. And even though the legends say all the paths between us and the dark forest were supposedly destroyed this group were able to find more and I followed them through and-"

"Pineclaw calm down" I came over and patted his shoulder. "And also keep it down" Nudging at the snoring Rushfire. He gave me an apologetic smile and nodded.

"I remember that the cats have footholds in Riverclan, what ever that means, and I am just... worried that's all. Especially after the fire since-"

"The fire?" I went a bit wide eyed.

"Yeah, see after I over heard them mumbling about Riverclan I watched one of the she-cats leave and enter the living world. I didn't follow but afterwards I heard that a huge fire happened and- and so many died..." Pineclaw had the remorse spread across his face. "I- I know I was a huge Fox hearted aggressive mouse brain, and I always argued with everyone but I would never wanted any of my clan mates to die..."

"Are you saying they want to hurt the clans?" I buried the hatred that threatened to surface at the idea these cats caused Minnowkit and Luckywish's death.

"No... it doesn't sound like it. They want something else but they are laying down the path for their actual plans. It doesn't make sense about this paw hold in Riverclan and the maybe Fire start. But no cat on the Starclan wants to listen to me, and I don't trust any cat in the Dark Forest"

"So you came to look for a clan mate?"

"Yeah... and even then I thought only you and Dawndrop would listen. Even if I was rude and aggressive you would still listen"

"Mmm..."

"I'm not crazy am I?"

"No... no I believe you! You wouldn't make up a story like that"

"Now look who is insulting" he laughed quietly and so did I. "I-I can come back with more information if you want? I don't know much but it- I am gonna be honest here it kind of scared me how bad it sounded just listening to them"

"How many are there?"

"Six I think? See they talk in this really hard to get spot and it's so think with bramble and throbs you really can't see them. But I do remember watching the one she-cat leaving. She was a fluffy silver and grey cat with green eyes. And then there are four toms voices

and two she-cats, including mystery silver cat"

"Yeah... yeah try and get more info! We can bring it to Applestar if you can bring something more substantial"

"Oh Starclan I forgot that happy go lucky moss brain is Leader now"

There is the old Pineclaw! But in reality do I really believe him? Sounds outrageous sure, but would any cat really risk coming here and talking to a clan mate when he is a dark forest cat? Mmm...

"Pineclaw who killed you? Was it one of these darkforest cats? Or was it a rogue?"

"Huh? Oh no... I have no idea who killed me. They moved so fast I didn't even recognize what happened till I was bleeding out"

"Oh..." silence fell between us for a few moments before Pineclaw broke it.

"I should get going before snore fest over there wakes up" right on cue Rushfire let out a loud snore. I shook my head and giggled.

"Him and Iceeye can sleep through anything"

"I'll try and get back with more information, I think they might start doing more but I am not sure"

"No worries, I'll try and get guard duty next moon if that works?"

"Thanks..." he nodded before swiftly leaving. I followed him leave and felt a pit open up in my stomach. *This...this is a lot for me to handle...I mean the prophecy and now this? Unless the two are linked? But that doesn't make much sense, unless the crimson is the dark forest?*

Alligances Update (so much has happened, god)

Thunderclan

Leader
Applestar - a cream and white fluffy tom with three white paws and amber eyes

Deputy
Skyleaf - a white tom with a brown stripe, tail, and paws

Medicine Cat
Coldheart - a black fluffy tom with dull blue eyes
Moonwater - a dark grey tabby she-cat with dark blue eyes

Warriors
Ravenclaw - a large fluffy black tom with hazel eyes and long whiskers
Apprentice, Cardinalpaw
Whiteleaf - a white she-cat with dark green eyes and a large, fluffy tail
Apprentice, Springpaw
Sparrowscar - a dark red solid tom with blue eyes. Heavily scared on one side of his body
Tanglestripe - a brown tabby tom with dark orange eyes and a torn right ear
Smokefoot - a dark grey tabby tom with darker grey paws and dark orange eyes
Apprentice, Flypaw
Iceeye - a dark grey and white tabby tom with ice blue eyes
Silverfeather - a white, silver, and dark grey tabby she-cat with purplish blue eyes
Darkcloud - a lean black and white tom with dark yellow eyes
Branchtail - a dark brown tabby tom with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Firepaw
Rushfire - a ginger and red tabby tom with bright green eyes

Foxhop - a orange tabby tom with two white paws and bright green eyes
Puddlesplash - a strong brown and grey tabby tom with one blue eye one green eye
Apprentice, Forestpaw
Mapleclaw - a bright red tabby she-cat with a white belly, chest, ear, and hazel eyes
Apprentice, Mothpaw
Orchidfrost - an almost all white she-cat except for the calico tail, face, and dark brown eyes
Nightrain - a dark grey dapple she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Slatefoot - a blue tom with light grey paws and ice blue eyes
Apprentice, Fallenpaw
Coppernose - a black tom with a white muzzle and bright orange eyes

Apprentices
Springpaw - a light grey speckled she-cat with dark green eyes
Cardinalpaw - a orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with dark brown eyes
Mothpaw - a grey fluffy chested tabby she-cat with brown belly, legs, and green eyes
Flypaw - a light brown tabby tom with a white belly, one white paw, dark brown paws, and bright orange eyes
Forestpaw- a white and silver tabby she-cat with bright green eyes
Firepaw - a white and ginger tabby tom with dark grey tail and purple eyes
Fallenpaw - an all white, small she-cat with purplish blue eyes

Queens
Dawndrop - a ginger and cream tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes (Flutterkit and Sycamorekit)
Neville - a grey and white tom with purple eyes
Sagelight - a muscular dark brown tabby she-cat with a fluffy mane, tail, light brown belly, and bright orangish yellow eyes

Elders
Rainstripe - a stocky blue tabby tom with blue eyes

Kits
Flutterkit - a grey and pale ginger tabby she-cat with blue eyes and

round ears
Sycamorekit - a grey tabby tom with a white belly, big paws, and bright green eyes
Blizzardkit - a white and blue splotched tabby tom with green eyes
Jaggedkit - a spiky black tom with a large tail and yellow eyes

ShadowClan

Leader
Tinystar - a tiny grey tabby she-cat with yellow eyes
Apprentice, Talonpaw

Deputy
Sandheart - a pale yellow dapple tom with golden paws and dark orange eyes
Apprentice, Snowpaw

Medicine Cat
Tallstem - a long legged golden tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes
Sootfall - a stocky, dark grey tabby tom with bright amber eyes
Apprentice, Mistpaw

Warriors
Ryestep - a dark brown stocky tom with darker brown paws and dark orange eyes
Apprentice, Morningpaw
Leaffur - a grey tom with bright yellow eyes
Sorrelscar - a dark golden fluffy, tabby tom with pale hazel eyes and a scratched up muzzle
Apprentice, Shinypaw
Oakface - a white, heavily built tom with broken face markings and dark yellow eyes
Yarrowpad - a dark yellow tabby tom with a fluffy tail and light brown eyes
Twigtail - a thin, brown and white fluffy she-cat with dark hazel eyes
Batwing - a large, fluffy black tom with purplish blue eyes
Lynxfur - a golden leopard tom with bright blue eyes
Swanfeather - a thin, white fluffy she-cat with dark green eyes
Cloverstem - a slightly fluffy, solid grey tom with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Sunpaw

Peareyes - a white and brown she-cat with hazel eyes
Shrewnose - a light brown tabby she-cat with darker brown paws and dark green eyes
Troutscale - a small dark grey dapple she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Sprucepounce - a velvety brown tabby tom with bright blue eyes
Blossomtail - a golden tortoiseshell she-cat with white speckled tail and dull amber eyes
Badgerfur - a black and white tom with bright brown eyes
Cedarlight - a brown tortoiseshell tom with dark green eyed

Apprentices
Morningpaw - a light grey and bright golden tabby she-cat with green eyes
Sunpaw - a dark golden tabby tom with light blue eyes
Mistpaw - a silver fluffy tom with yellow eyes
Shinypaw - a blueish silver and white tabby she-cat with black paws and dark green eyes
Talonpaw - a light brown tabby she-cat with bright amber eyes
Snowpaw - an all white fluffy tom with blue eyes (he is deaf)

Queens
Doveshade - a fluffy brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes

Elders
Flamefall - a lean orange tabby tom with bright yellow eyes. (Former Leader)

Kits
None.

WindClan

Leader
Snailstar - a thin, dark brown dapple tom with dark hazel eyes and a lame back leg
Apprentice, Shadypaw

Deputy
Wildcloud - a fluffy, white tom with ginger splotches

Medicine Cat
Daisyeyes - a small, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes
Apprentice, Fennelpaw

Warriors
Fernmist - a fluffy, dark grey tabby she-cat with pretty green eyes
Mistmask - a dark grey dapple she-cat with blue eyes
Hayheart - a thin golden she-cat with bright orange eyes
Birchleaf - a muscular brownish ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with bright hazel eyes
Thrushfeather - a dull brown tabby tom with pale blue eyes
Roseflare - a fluffy, ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with orange eyes
Apprentice, Rowanpaw
Flowerbreeze - a white thin she-cat with dark orange splotches and yellowish orange eyes
Mudstripe - a dark brown tabby tom with aquamarine eyes
Swiftwater - a grey tom with dark green eyes, white chest, and two light grey paws
Ferretflight - a brown tabby tom with white paws and dark green eyes
Leafbloom - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with yellow eyes
Rustfur - a dull ginger tabby tom with grayish blue eyes
Horsepelt - a light brown tom with one white paw and bright orange eyes
Heronwing - a light brown tabby tom with grey eyes
Archshore - a dark ginger and white tabby she-cat with amber eyes

Apprentices
Rowanpaw - a dull red and ginger tom with grey eyes
Shadypaw - a orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes
Fennelpaw- a light brown tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes

Queens
Aspenskip - a muscular and fluffy black she-cat with pretty brown eyes (Cricketkit and Cavekit)
Milkweed - a golden tabby she-cat with a fluffy tail, one white paw, and orange eyes

Elders
Spekflight - a dark orange solid she-cat with dark orange eyes and

white spek on her chest

Kits
Cricketkit - a black and orange tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes
Cavekit - a tiny grey and white tabby tom with amber eyes
Sunnykit - a ginger and white tabby tom with green eyes
Cloudykit - a ginger and blue calico tom with orange eyes
Rainykit - a blue and white splotched she-cat with purple eyes

Riverclan

Leader
Briarstar - a lean, black and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes

Deputy
Shortlake - a silver tom with dark blueish grey eyes and a stumpy tail

Medicine Cat
Ravennest - a black tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes

Warriors
Owlback - a stocky speckled brown tom with yellow eyes
Flailbelly - a large, fluffy sliver speckled tom with white belly, chest, and bright amber eyes.
Mossyflower - a fluffy blue she-cat with darker blue splotches and aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Lichenpaw
Scorchfire - a black, white, and ginger patched tom with bright orange eyes and a fluffy tail
Apprentice, Bluepaw
Clifffern - an orangish brown tabby tom with green eyes
Lightningcloud - a fluffy dark grey tom with a darker grey mane and bright yellow eyes
Tansypelt - a silver she-cat with a fluffy tail and hazel eyes
Apprentice, Ripplepaw
Gorsefern - a golden she-cat with white chest, belly, ears, muzzle, and hazel eyes
Redleap - a dark red stocky tom with orange eyes, white chest,

belly, and tipped tail
Swampsong - a cream tom with brown points and amber eyes
Reedbee - a silverish blue tabby she-cat with minty green eyes
Boulderstep - a dark blue stocky tom with lighter blue splotches and blue eyes
Apprentice, Hawkpaw
Willowheart - a silver fluffy tom with white ears, paw, muzzle, and dark green eyes
Tornpelt - a grey and white tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Crowflight - a dark grey fluffy tom with brown eyes
Jayshine - a silver and grey fluffy tom with grey eyes
Raindapple - a light blue speckled tom with amber eyes and a fluffy tail
Wetpatch - a small, stocky, white and dark grey tabby she-cat with aquamarine eyes

Apprentices
Bluepaw - a blue calico she-cat with dark ginger paws and yellow eyes
Lichenpaw - a cream tom with brown points and grey eyes
Ripplepaw - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes
Hawkpaw - a dark red tabby she-cat with white paws and amber eyes

Queens
Thicketshade - a orange and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes

Elders
Deerstripe - a fluffy, dark brown tabby tom with orange eyes
Thistlepad - a large, fluffy brown and white tabby tom with bright yellow eyes
Plumfeather - a fluffy golden tabby she-cat with bright green eyes

Kits
Redkit - a thin dull red and white she-cat with yellow eyes

SkyClan

Leader
Whitestar - a black fluffy tom with white paws, ears, tipped tail, and

orange eyes
Apprentice, Elkpaw

Deputy
Dewmist - a light blue fluffy tom with blue eyes

Medicine Cat
Beechjaw - a large fluffy dark yellow tom with white paws, darker yellow jaw, ears, and orange eyes
Apprentice, Brookpaw

Warriors
Ashbreeze - a large fluffy smokey grey tom with bright orange eyes
Apprentice, Honeypaw
Leafybush - a fluffy brown tabby tom with white chest, belly, paws, muzzle, and dull aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Wingpaw
Sorrelfall - a grey tabby tom with green eyed
Apprentice, Curlypaw
Hawkflight - a ginger and red tabby tom with bright yellow eyes
Brindlepelt - a lean brown tabby she-cat with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Vinepaw
Lakemask - a ginger and silver calico she-cat with bright aquamarine eyes
Pearlstreak - a grey and white patched she-cat with a grey streak and bright yellow eyes
Songheart - a dark grey she-cat with a black paw, black tipped tail, and dark blue eyes
Apprentice, Snowypaw
Rubblebounce - a blue dapple fluffy tom with orangish yellow eyes
Apprentice, Peakpaw
Patchfur - a dark ginger and white tortoiseshell she-cat with dull orange eyes
Flintclaw - a large and fluffy silver tom with grey eyes
Nettlewhisker - a stocky, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

Apprentices
Brookpaw - a light grey tabby she-cat with blue eyes
Curlypaw - a large fluffy brown tabby tom with lime green eyes
Elkpaw - a ginger and grey tabby tom with dark blueish grey eyes

Snowypaw - a dark blue tabby she-cat with grey eyes and a silver muzzle
Wingpaw - a white tom with an orange splotch and lemon green eyes
Peakpaw - a black and grey tom with blue eyes and a fluffy tail
Honeypaw - a golden calico she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Vinepaw - a sandy colored tabby she-cat with green eyes

Queens
Lagoontail - a silver blue lean she-cat with red orangish eyes and a silver tipped tail (Mousekit and Lilykit)

Elders
Weedfoot - a golden tabby tom with bright green eyes
Junipernose - a dark brown tabby she-cat with white belly, chest, muzzle, and bright amber eyes

Kits
Mousekit - a dark brown tom with grey eyes
Lilykit - a fluffy silver tabby she-cat with orangish red eyes

Loners and Kittypets

Fitz - a small brown tabby tom with yellow eyes
Cody - a fluffy black tom with a missing right foot and green eyes
Talon - A ginger and white tabby she-cat with grey paws and blue eyes
Flicker- a dark red tabby tom with white belly, paws, and bright blue eyes.
Lint- a velvety grey tom with red amber eyes
Smaug- a light red tabby tom with golden eyes
Indigo- a light grey and white tabby she-cat with light purple eyes
Lemon- a golden tabby she-cat with white belly, mane, paws, and dark orange eyes.

Chapter 20: Sagelight

"Should you be going to the gathering?" Foxhop asked nervously. His green eyes looked me up and down in search of signs to worry about. I gave him a weak but hopefully still comforting smile.

"I am fine, I have only been pregnant for a two moons Foxhop"

"I-I know but-"

"Foxhop, Moonwater said I am good to go so I am going. It's the first gathering since the fire and I want to see my friends"

"Alright, we'll finish this mouse before we do" he shoved a grey mouse he was eating towards me. I rolled my eyes a little and ate it to please my anxious mate.

"Happy?"

"Yeah" he smiled at me and purred. I laughed annoyingly at him.

"Alright! Let's get going everyone!" Applestar called out next to the camp entrance. I looked up and spotted Puddlesplash saying bye to Rushfire before nuzzling his mate.

Sad Rushfire isn't going tonight, I bet his mother and younger brothers miss him.

"Wow, Blizzardkit and Jaggedkit are so big" Foxhop made the comment as I braved up onto my paws. I didn't bother looking at the now seven moon old kits as I was pre-occupied with my large belly.

I got big so fast, how many kits am I carrying?!

"When will Applestar make them apprentices? He made Springtail a Warrior two days ago"

"When Applestar feels like it" I grumbled. We began following the

crowd out of camp and off towards the island. I looked around and saw Mapleclaw talking to Cardinalpaw and Mothpaw, with Ravenclaw muttering about something. Mapleclaw has been pleasant to everyone's surprise and has been training Mothpaw well, the young she-cat should have been made a warrior since Mothpaw and her litter are have successfully completed their assessment too.

"I like leaf-fall, it has a nice crisp feeling to it" I heard Tanglestripe comment as he walked with Puddlesplash.

"Yeah, even with the forest still regrowing it still has the leaf-fall beauty"

"Applestar is gonna mention the lose dirt and mud right? Yesterday Branchtail almost got swallowed up by a small landslide" Ravenclaw echoed concern.

"Thank Starclan we have our camp next to giant stone blocks or our camp could get swept away" Springtail joked. I felt myself tighten at the thought of us getting buried alive and I was suddenly aware of the little lives growing in me.

"I am surprised your coming along Puddlesplash, you have been spending so much time with Rushfire recently that I thought you'd be back in camp" Tanglestripe said directly

"I got a lot of friends to catch up with" the silver and brown tom laughed nervously.

"You are the most anxious cat I know, yet you have the most friends outside of Thunderclan" Foxhop joked. Any cat nearby laughed a little and the group just kept talking as we made our way to the gathering. The air was cold but not cold enough to make you shiver. Springtail came up to my side and smiled big.

"Have you two thought up any names for those little bundles you are gonna have?"

"Springtail-" Foxhop started to tell her off but I glared at him. He sighed and smiled weakly at her. I turned back and smiled at my younger sister.

"We definitely want to name one of them Eaglekit"

"That's a great one! Hey can I offer up a name?"

"Sure" I answered. Foxhop made a worried intake of breath but didn't say anything.

"Ashenkit! I think it's a great name! Obviously not my own top name, that is for my own kit but I think you would love it!

"That seems like a great name Springtail" Foxhop agreed. He actually sounded pleased by it and I also liked it.

Ashenkit, definitely for a grey or brown kit. I like the name definitely!

"You want kits?" Slatefoot asked. He had come up on Springtails other side.

"Well, yeah! One day!" the grey dapple smiled wide. "If you had kits what would you name one?"

"Drizzlekit"

"That was fast, have you thought about it that often?" Springtail jokes. Slatefoot got embarrassed and looked away.

"No-no, just that Drizzle was part of my moms warrior name"

"I never heard you talk about your mom before. But I thought her name was Edith?

"She was a Warrior before she lived at the barn" Slatefoot mumbled.

"That must be hard to talk about, your mom" I said out of comfort.

"She was the best hunter and fighter I knew" he said fondly. "She use to beat dad up all the time"

"Guessing she was another Windclan cat" Foxhop said.

"Umm- yeah... yeah she was". It was obvious he was lying but no one was going to say anything. I decided to change the subject.

"Hey! You must be excited to show Fallenpaw around during the gathering! Where is she?"

"Oh! Yeah! Fallenpaw is definitely gonna enjoy her time! And she is hanging out with Firepaw, he is a little anxious"

"He reminds me so much of Puddlesplash" Foxhop joked.

"Hey! Being nervous is called being cautious!" Puddlesplash called back and we all laughed.

"I bet his friends are gonna be jealous he is training another apprentice" Slatefoot said sweetly.

"Yeah, and Rushfire has been watching Jaggedkit and Blizzardkit when Darkcloud has things to do" Springtail added.

"Yeah, Darkcloud has been struggling" I mumble. *Darkcloud looks ready to collapse half the time. He just keeps working himself to the point of sleep.*

"Skyleaf has been going really easy on him, but Darkcloud is doing this to himself" Foxhop grumbled, but I could still tell he was worried.

"He wants to be a strong role model for his own kits" I added. "I bet you'll be doing the same thing"

"Hey, I am gonna spend a lot of time with my kits. Watch me!" Foxhop said playfully.

"Sparrowscar has also been watching Jaggedkit and Blizzardkit," Slatefoot said. Foxhop grumbled something incoherent and I sighed a little.

"Is it just me, or is Applestar behind on ceremonies? I mean to be honest Darkclouds sons and Dawndrop own kits should be apprentices by now" Springtail mumbled. "He even did my ceremony a moon late!"

"I guess he just doesn't keep track of time all that well" Slatefoot shrugged. "To be honest even I do sometimes"

"Yeah but when you gave four age ready kits in the nursery you would think he'd notice" Foxhop added on, seemingly to agree with Springtail.

"And it wouldn't be a bad thing if there to be more room in the nursery" I continued agreeing.

Chapter 21: Mapleclaw

"Hey Puddlesplash!" I heard that Riverclan she-cat, Tornpelt, call out for my friend. I watched as his face lit up but then he quickly looked over at me.

"Do you wanna hang out with my friends? If not I wouldn't mind just hanging out with you alone"

"Sure! As long as I don't get to to talk with Ferretflight"

"I don't think I will ever understand your issue with him" Puddlesplash joked. The clearing was nice, with the sky above bright with the full moon. You could barely see the stars with how brilliant the moon was. The only clans here was Thunderclan and Riverclan. Applestar was already talking with Brairstar, and from the Riverclan cocky attitude it was easy to see she was proud of something. "Hi Tornpelt!" Puddlesplash greeted. Tornpelt was a large, heavily built she-cat. Her grey and white tabby fur was thick and fluffy. She was kinda intimidating, like Sagelight, but Tornpelt was less of a softy.

"Hi Mapleclaw" Tornpelt greeted. I nodded acknowledgement and greeted her with a small smile. "Is Rushfire not here tonight?"

"Yeah, he is staying behind in camp"

"Ah, avoiding Hawkflight" Tornpelt groaned. I swear I could hear her eyes roll.

"You bet"

"Ugh! What I wouldn't give up to smack that prejudice mouse brain upside the head one of these days"

"He showed up at camp awhile back, yowling about Rushfire having to come back to Skyclan" I rolled my eyes at the memory and Tornpelt groaned loudly.

"How did a cat like that have a son like Rushfire"

"It's called Brindlepelt" Puddlesplash added with a small chuckle.

"Hey look! Windclan is here!" Tornpelt announced. I turned my head and glanced at the arriving clan. Snailstar, the substitute leader, hobbled up to the leaders. There are very few cats in Windclan that I like, and their leader is one of them. Snailstar has never let his bad leg hold back, I mean he is leader of his clan by his clan mates vote. The brown dapple tom began talking with the other two leaders and I looked back to cat watching the others.

"Ferretflight! Mudstripe over here!" Puddlesplash called out. I groaned externally at the name of Ferretflight. I glared at glared at him as he and Mudstripe approached. Now Mudstripe is a dark, and I mean dark, brown tabby. I then noticed the rather timid looking apprentice also following them and recognize him.

Heronpaw? He is the one that chased the rabbit over the border and got scratched by- I shook her out of my mind and greeted the tom I actually liked with small smile.

"Hey! Starclan sake it feels like forever since we were together" Tornpelt smiled at his apprentice.

"Hi Heronpaw!" Puddlesplash greeted the apprentice.

"It's actually Heronwing now" the Tom puffed his chest out in pride.

"Aww! Congrats ya little scoundrel!" Tornpelt ruffled the top of Heronwing head before laughing. "And I am guessing Archpaw is also a warrior now?"

"Yep! Officially we have caught up with Puddlesplash" Ferretflight gave Puddlesplash a confident smirk.

"Oh now wait just a moment you wirery cat" Puddlesplash gave him his own confident smirk, "I myself have another one"

"Oh come one!" Ferretflight groaned, so did everyone else.

"Just when we thought you were not better than us you go ahead

and prove it wrong" Mudstripe gave my pal a nudge. Puddlesplash laughed nervously. "Wow, you must have done really well with Slatefoot to get another one"

"Mothpaw passed her assessment and should be a Warrior any day now" I added. Tornpelt gave me a purr in congrats and Mudstripe gave me a happy smile. I didn't really give Ferretflight my attention.

"I hope Lynxfur comes, I am worried about him" Tornpelt expressed.

"Yeah, since Snowkits birth it seems him and Swanfeather have been at each others throats" Mudstripe also said, concerned for their Shadowclan companion.

"Is it really that bad?" I am just learning this now.

"Let's just say Swanfeather isn't the... greatest mate known to the clans" Mudstripe grimaced.

"She is a real Hawkflight, if you get our drift" Tornpelt mumbled.

"Well, it's nice to know I am on your mind too" Patchfur voice sounded from behind. We all turned around to see the grey tortoiseshell wall up confidently.

"Well I mean, you kind of are forgettable" I joked. She nudged me hard and we all laughed. I glanced back at the leaders and saw not only was Whitestar there but Tinystar, Shadowclans leader, as well. *That means-*

"Hey guys" sounded a tired voice. I recognized it and saw the leopard printed cream tom. Lynxfur was another handsome cat, that wasn't only generally good looking but was known as one of Shadowclans best fighters. I could take him on but I might end up dying if I tried. He looked tired, with bags under his eyes and paws dragged slightly as Lynxfur sat down. Reminded me of Darkcloud in a way.

"Look at that, we are all here!" Tornpelt said gleefully. From the corner of my eye I could see the leaders were climbing the oak to start the gathering soon.

"And it looks like the leaders will be starting soon" I added gesturing to the giant oak. As if to confirm me, a vice rang across the clearing.

"Let us begin! I'll go first" Briarstar mewed loudly. I looked up to see the leaders sitting in the branches of the oak. "Riverclan has been doing well since Riverclan territory wasn't destroyed by the fire!" A few mews or approval from her warriors. "And before announcing our new Warriors, apprentices, and kits I would like to warn Windclan and Shadowclan to be careful along the shoreline when doing patrol, the ground is basically falling underneath everyone's paws right now at the lightest touch"

"Thank you Briarstar" Snailstar bowed. The old leader continued.

"We have three new Warriors! Jayshine, Raindapple, and Wetpatch!"

"Jayshine! Raindapple! Wetpatch!" The crowd of cats cheered.

"Well, well, well! Looks like I wasn't the only cat with a successful apprentice" Lynxfur commented, remarking his own apprentice must have been made a warrior too.

Starclan above Applestar, get your act together and make Mothpaw and her sister Warriors...

"We also have three new apprentices! Lichenpaw, Ripplepaw, and Hawkpaw!"

"Lichenpaw! Ripplepaw! Hawkpaw!"

"Goldenfang, while sadly dying in kitting, did deliver Riverclan a new kit! Grasskit! And we have another pair of cats expecting, Thicketlight and Willowhearts first litter!"

"Tell your brother congrats from us will ya?" Puddlesplash whispered.

"Sure thing" she winked. Briarstar sat back down and signaled the end of her turn. Snailstar stood up, a little wonky but still sturdy on the branch.

"Windclan is also doing well! We would like to report the fact that the moor hills have been loose enough to cause small landslides, but nothing Windclan can handle" Thunderclan made some mumbles of concern, as we have a small issue with that as well. "I would also like to report that we have a new Warriors, Horsepelt, Heronwing, and Archshore!"

"Wait, what happened to Bristlepaw? Archp-I mean Archshores littermate?" Lynxfur asked confused

"Sadly got caught in the fire an well.. . We didn't get to her in time..." Ferretflight mumbled sadly.

"Horsepelt! Heronwing! Archshore!" The clans cheered.

"And three new apprentices! Rowanpaw! Shadypaw! And our new medicine cat apprentice Fennelpaw!"

"Rowanpaw! Shadypaw! Fennelpaw!"

"And lastly, Speckflight has now retiered to the elders den. I hope she has many seasons of rest" Snailstar sat down and Whitestar stood up next.

"Skyclan has been doing well after Fire with prey still plenty!" The black and white cat started with. "We have two new Warriors as well! Flintclaw and Nettlewhisker!"

"Flintclaw! Nettlewhisker!"

"And a really long list of apprentices!" Whitestar laughed before continuing. "Snowypaw, Wingpaw, Peakpaw, Honeypaw, and Vinepaw!"

"Snowypaw! Wingpaw! Peakpaw! Honeypaw! Vinepaw!"

"How many apprentices does that make?" Puddlesplash asked Patchfur.

"With those five, plus Brookpaw, Curlypaw, and Elkpaw, that makes eight"

"Almost as many as you do Warriors right?" Ferretflight added. "Oh... sorry..." he quickly realized his mistake. It was Shadowclan and Windclan who caused Skyclans to become so small.

"You're good, at least you aren't using me as a nest right now" the tortoiseshell joked. We all turned to see Lynxfur asleep against Patchfur. We all giggled and turned our attention back up front.

"Now with that, I would like to address the fire! You see I was planning on mentioning at the gathering two moons ago that a pair of twolegs were camping in our territory with no sign of leaving, building a small fire through the day and night!" Murmurs of hatred towards twolegs spread through the clan, though Riverclan wasn't making much of a fuss. "I had no idea that the twolegs would loose control of the fire as they had been there a few days and nothing seemed to be going a miss, other than you know... twolegs. I am sorry and I should have quickly warned the other clans of this danger immediately!"

"You are fine Whitestar" Snailstar comforted the younger leader. "You said it yourself you had no reason to think they would loose control of the fire"

"Snailstar is right" Applestar nudged his friend in confidence. Some cats in the crowd didn't agree with that.

"It would have had been no use to Riverclan so I have no need for the apology" Briarstar boasted slightly. Applestar ignored her and stood up smiling big. I couldn't help but have my eyes dart down to where Skyleaf was and the feeling of disappointment rise. *That should be me, but I still have a chance.*

"Sadly, during that horrible fire, we lost our leader Wishstar!" Sad murmurs from Riverclan and Skyclan filled the clearing. She helped lead them through the Yellowstar wars, Wishstar herself was a legend amongst the living.

"I am Thunderclans new leader, and my chosen deputy is Skyleaf"

"Skyleaf! Skyleaf! Skyleaf!"

"Sagelight and Foxhop are expecting a litter of new kits! We also have two new Warriors! Coppernose and Springtail!"

"Coppernose! Springtail!"

"He didn't even mention Petalclaw..." Puddlesplash mumbled. Pain stung in my chest at his words and I looked at my paws.

"That she-cat who attacked Heronwing?" Mudstripe asked.

"Yeah, she died that same day everything happened, if I remember correctly only a little bit after everything at the border went down" Puddlesplash added to with a little mourning in his voice.

"Oh Starclan that is rough" Ferretflight sounded skittish.

"Poor Foxhop, his first apprentice just getting killed so quickly" Tornpelt mumbled.

"Yeah... he took it hard..." I added lowly.

"We also have a new apprentices! Flypaw, Forestpaw, Firepaw, and Fallenpaw!"

"Flypaw! Forestpaw! Firepaw! Fallenpaw!"

"One thing I too wish to warn the clans! For the last three moons we have been experiencing a loner or rogue killing Warriors in cold blooded murder. This includes Pineclaw and Petalclaw! We know the murder has red fur but that is all! If you see any suspicious activity please act carefully and if you do capture them and know it was said cat, Thunderclan asks for penance for the murders!"

"Interesting that some random was able to kill two of your Warriors Applestar" Briarstar quizzed.

"They attacked them when they were weak and vulnerable, near borders in fact" That made Whitestar and Snailstar perk up.

"You aren't sayin-" Snailstar started to ask, but Applestar quickly soothed the tom cat.

"No we know for a fact it wasn't any of your cats or Skyclans, we would have smelled it" I tended up.

"Maybe the cats that killed you Warriors started the fire?" Patchfur whispered to Puddlesplash but he looked a bit shocked at the statement.

"Maybe? Is there proof that it was purposely started?" Patchfur shrugged and the two stopped conversing.

Odd... Applestar sat down and Tinystar was the last one. The tiny she-cat was super small, I mean extremely small.

"Wow, I guess everyone has been busy these last few moons" she joked. Many giggled and Tinystar continued, "Shadowclan is doing excellent after the fire, with prey running well!"

"Tell that to sleeping Lynxfur here" Patchfur joked herself.

"We have four new Warriors! Sprucepounce, Blossomtail, Badgerfur, and Cedarlight!"

Wait, didn't Sprucepounce have a brother? Hoppaw I think? Unless-

"Sprucepounce! Blossomtail! Badgerfur! Cedarlight!"

"We also have a new apprentice! Snowpaw!"

"Snowpaw! Snowpaw! Snowpaw!"

"It's not like he is gonna hear it" a toms voice giggled and as we all turned to see who made the rude comment Lynxfur had opened his eyes up and hissed.

"Shut your fish breath muzzle you over grown toad" the cream tom snapped. Tornpelt shot the the cat who made the rude comment a dirty look, guessing he was a Riverclan cat. He was a dark blue splotched tom with blue eyes. Stocky build like Tornpelt but smaller.

"So rude Boulderstep" Tornpelt scolded. Boulderstep rolled his eyes and walked away. Lynxfur looked very much ready to follow him

and tear his ears off but Puddlesplash and Ferretflight moved in front of him.

"It's not worth it" Puddlesplash warned Lynxfur.

"That concludes this gathering!"

"Puddlesplash!" A she-cats happy new sounded. Puddlesplash was quickly tackled by a pale brown tabby. A tabby with similar marking to Rushfire. Two apprentice came trotting after the brown tabby, looking perplexed and apologetic.

"Mom!" said a ginger and grey tabby tom.

Elkpaw is his name if I remember correctly. The brown tabby next to him is Curlypaw I think, which means the cat that tackled Puddlesplash in glee is-

"H-hi Brindlepelt" Puddlesplash said as he got up, the brown tabby sliding off. Brindlepelt looked up at my friend fondly and full of so much joy she looked ready to burst. His friends looked bothered by the Skyclan she-cat, but said nothing.

"You have to tell me what you and Rushfire have bern up to! Sad he isn't here! He is alright right? Oh you two need to visit us! Don't worry I'll keep Hawkflight away and-"

"Mom, let him talk" Curlypaw pleaded with his mother. Brindlepelt pulled her ears back in embarrassment.

"S-Sorry, I am just so excited to see him!"

"Hi Puddlesplash" The two brother greeted calmly. This is what a supportive family is.

They don't treat Puddlesplash like dung...

"Hi guys, and yeah maybe you could ask Whitestar to set something up with Applestar for a visit" Puddlesplash's friends had dissolved to talk with other cats, cause at this rate Brindlepelt was gonna take up the entire time. I decided to stay in case Hawkflight was around cause he doesn't need to bully Puddlesplash.

"So, is one of those new apprentices your or Rushfires?" Brindlepelt could barely attain her excitement. Curlypaw kinda laughed at his mom while Elkpaw looked embarrassed.

"Well, I did get one. Forestpaw!"

"You are such a great mentor truly! And I bet she will be as fine of a warrior as you!" Puddlesplash blushed at her comment.

"Is Hawkflight here?" I asked. The three looked at me with mixed emotions.

"No, he isn't allowed to gathering till he apologizes to Puddlesplash and Rushfire" Curlypaw grumbled. Puddlesplash looked at his paws guiltily.

"This situation is all my-"

"It isn't Puddlesplash, you make Rushfire happy and that is all that matters" Elkpaw said wisely.

"He is just a cat who can't except that his son is gay" Brindlepelt said sadly.

Those two aren't mates anymore because of it... "Everyone is leaving Puddlesplash, we should too"

"Yeah, your right!" He nodded a good bye to his mates family before following me to our clan mates.

"Puddlesplash"

"Umm... yeah Mapleclaw?"

"If Hawkflight gives you anymore problems I will beat his butt for you if you ask" I joked. He laughed.

"There wouldn't be much left of Hawkflight if the mighty Mapleclaw fights him"

"No, no, no! Mighty is too strong of a word to describe me, pick something more modest will you" I said in a sarcastic uppity tone.

We both laughed and made our way back to the tree bridge.

Chapter 22: Puddlesplash

"There ya go Forestpaw! That was great foot work" I complemented my apprentice. She looked at me and smiled as she got off Firepaw. Firepaw looked disappointed as he looked sadly at his white paws. I felt sympathy for the dull red tabby. He hadn't been able to get the move right in all of training today.

"Firepaw, you did great too. Next time you should try placing your feet wider" Branchtail advises gently. Firepaw put on a weak smile.

"Oh! Puddlesplash! When will my assessment be?"Forestpaw said over confidently. I looked at her to stop and she did with small flinch at her own stupidity.

"You guys still have a bit of training to do before you become warriors"

"Puddlesplash is right, so let's continue training!" Branchtail added.

"Actually, you four should head back to camp. Applestar is gonna be doing a lot of ceremonies today" I heard a friendly mew. Skyleaf entered the clearing and his two kits went to greet him quickly.

"Skyleaf! Dad! Wanna see the cool move they taught us!" Forestpaw asked happily.

"Yeah, it is tough but we got it down" Firepaw sounded more confident talking to his father.

"Maybe later, anyway come on!" the deputy nodded his head back to camp.

"Looks like training is over for today, but will come back tomorrow and practice it some more" I said. Branchtail nodded approvingly. Forestpaw groaned out of impatience but didn't say anything. I laughed a little and Firepaw rolled his purple eyes at his older littermate.

"Forestpaw that is rude"

"But I want to train more! I want to prove I am the best warrior!"

"There is more than hunting and fighting to the life of a Warrior" Skyleaf advises his daughter with a gentle purr. I smiled and we followed the deputy back to camp. Oddly this leaf-fall was very rainy and cloudy, more like new-leaf. The ground was wet and squished heavily under my paws. Entire tail length of dirt shifted with each step.

Gotta be careful about landslides up past the stone hallow now. As we walked Skyleaf piped up ahead.

"Hey Puddlesplash, could you take Darkclouds spot on the hunting patrol later? I am kicking him off because he needs rest"

"Sure!"

"I am surprised that Foxhop isn't making you stay in camp, with Sagelight due in the next moon"

"Yeah, I am so tempted to ask Applestar to give me one as an apprentice when they are born and older" Skyleaf said jokingly.

"I bet by the time they are six moons I'll be warrior, maybe I could train one!" Forestpaw said excitedly.

"You would be a bad teacher" Firepaw teased. His sister smacked him upside the head with her paw.

"Mouse brain!"

"Bird droppings!"

"Badger breath!"

"Fu-"

"Stop it you two!" Their dad warned. I laughed as the two apprentices mumbled incoherent words out of embarrassment.

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"Cardinalpaw! Mothpaw! Please step forward!" Applestar called out. The two older apprentices stepped forward. "I, Applestar, leader of Thunderclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these two apprentice. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn" I watched my cream tabby leader looked at Cardinalpaw first. "Cardinalpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do"

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Cardinalpaw, from this moment you will be known as Cardinalrush. StarClan honors your independence and resilience, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan"

"Cardinalrush! Cardinalrush! Cardinalrush!" I cheered with my clan mates.

"And Mothpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?" I could see out of the corner of my eye Mapleclaw looking proudly upon her apprentice, and I felt happy she felt happy.

"I do!"

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Mothpaw, from this moment you will be known as Mothdust. StarClan honors your challenge and prudence, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan"

"Mothdust! Mothdust! Mothdust!" I cheered as loudly as I could.

"I present Thunderclan two new warrior! Cardinalrush and Mothdust!" He placed his nose on each of their foreheads.

"Cardinalrush! Mothdust! Cardinalrush! Mothdust!"

"Now to make some new apprentices!"

"Aww man, the den is gonna get so crowded..." Forestpaw mumbled. I rolled my eyes jovially at the notion.

"Flutterkit! Please step forward!" I watched as the now seven moon old kit run up and slide to halt in front of Applestar. The crowd laughed just a little. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Flutterpaw. Your mentor will be Coppernose. I hope Coppernose will pass down all he knows on to you".

"That's a surprise" Rushfire commented. I nodded in agreement, confused. Most of the time some cat so young doesn't get an apprentice, much less one related by blood so closely as siblings. Coppernose moved forward and sat next to his younger sister.

"Coppernose, you are ready to take on your first apprentice. You have received excellent training from Iceeye, and you have shown yourself to be dedicated and prompt. You will be the mentor of Flutterpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Flutterpaw" the two touched noses and cheered.

"Flutterpaw! Flutterpaw! Flutterpaw!"

"Sycamorekit! Please step forward!" The grey tabby came forward, but less in a running format as his littermate. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Sycamorepaw. Your mentor will be Silverfeather. I hope Silverfeather will pass down all she knows on to you". I watched as the beautiful Silverfeather moved to the front and sat next to Sycamorepaw. "Silverfeather, you are ready to take on your another apprentice. You have shown yourself to be kind and empowering. You will be the mentor of Sycamorepaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Sycamorepaw" the two tabby's touched noses and the crowd cheered once again.

"Sycamorepaw! Sycamorepaw! Sycamorepaw!"

"Blizzardkit, please step forward!" I felt grief and joy as I watched Blizzardkit walk up to the front. A part of me wished Luckywish was here to watch in person. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Blizzardpaw. Your mentor

will be Nightrain. I hope Nightrain will pass down all she knows on to you" I watched the Nightrain step forward and stand next to her new apprentice. She looked so excited and determined, as she always did. "Nightrain, you are ready to take on your first apprentice. You had received excellent training from Wishstar, and you have shown yourself to be fearless and fortitudes. You will be the mentor of Blizzardpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Blizzardpaw"

"Blizzardpaw! Blizzardpaw! Blizzardpaw!" The crowd cheered as they touched noses. I yelled as loud as I could, and I could easily hear Darkcloud, Foxhop, and Sparrowscar doing the same.

"Lastly, Jaggedkit please step forward!" The spidey black tom kind of tripped on his way up but quickly recovered himself. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Jaggedpaw. Your mentor will be Tanglestripe. I hope Tanglestripe will pass down all he knows on to you". Tanglestripe moves through the crowd and sat next the the young cat. The brown tabby seemed larger next to skinner Jaggedpaw. "Tanglestripe, you are ready to take on another apprentice. You have shown yourself to be modest and straightforward. You will be the mentor of Jaggedpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Jaggedpaw" the two touched noses and the crowd began cheering again.

"Jaggedpaw! Jaggedpaw! Jaggedpaw!" As I called his name I felt a small pang rise in my chest.

Minnowkit should be up their... with Luckywish cheering...

"Flutterpaw! Sycamorepaw! Blizzardpaw! Jaggedpaw!" After the last cheer the clan was starting to disperse before Applestar stopped us. "Not so fast, I have one more thing to do!" We all stopped and took our seats again. "Ravenclaw, is it your wish to give up the name of a warrior and go to join the elders?" I looked up, peeking my ears.

Ravenclaw is becoming an elder? I looked around and saw everyone else was also pretty shocked. He didn't even mention this to any cat I am guessing.

"It is"

"Your Clan honors you and all the service you have given to us. I call upon StarClan to give you many moons of rest"

"Ravenclaw! Ravenclaw! Ravenclaw!" The clan cheered for the last time today. I watched sadly as Ravenclaw walked to the elders den, where Rainstripe looks on with pride. Most cats thought Ravenclaw was gonna work till he died, but maybe the loss of his mate hit him too hard.

"Wow, that was a lot of ceremonies" Rushfire sighed.

"Hey, I gotta take on a hunting patrol so Darkcloud could rest. Sorry I know you wanted to spend some time together"

"No it's fine, we are Warriors we got things to do" he joked, giving me a lick on the cheek. He looked kind of saddened but I promised myself to make it up to him when I got back.

"Come on Puddlesplash!" Forestpaw said racing past me.

"Forestpaw?"

"Your my mentor so I thought I could go hunting with you, dad, and Mapleclaw!" She stopped and spun around with excitement.

"Are you sure?" I asked.

"Of course! So let's go!"

I lightly sighed at my apprentice and followed her to where Skyleaf waited.

"Ah, you are bringing Forestpaw?" He asked quizzingly.

"Sadly yes" I teased her with a small nudge. She glared at me and stuck her tongue out.

"Let's get going" Mapleclaw said, arriving. She stopped when she saw Forestpaw and I. Her hazel eyes looked swiftly back at Skyleaf for clarification. "Why are they here? I thought it was gonna be you, me, and Darkcloud?"

"I am putting Darkcloud on forced nest rest" Skyleaf said confidently. I admired my old mentor leadership skills. "Anyway, let's get going!"

Chapter 23: Mapleclaw

"I'm gonna go this way" I said as I walked off from the patrol. Puddlesplash nodded and lead Forestpaw off somewhere and Skyleaf followed. Once I was alone, I scanned the area, getting down into a low crouch as soon as I spotted that fluffy grey tail. I moved forward slowly, placing my paws gently and cautiously. Once I was in leaping distance I stopped. Mouse brain me placed a foot on a leaf and it crunched under my weight. The squirrel didn't even look around it just bolted. I tried to chase after the damm thing but it had gone into a holly bush. I pawed at the ground with a hiss of frustration. "Ugh! Mouse brain!" I criticized myself.

"I guess you lost this?" Puddlesplash's voice piped up. I looked around the holly bush and saw him sitting there a little nervous. Before his brown paws was the squirrel that escaped me. I smirked at him and smiled.

"I knew you were there" Forestpaw was no where around, "where is your apprentice?"

"Oh! She went to hunt with Skyleaf"

"Family bonding?"

"Yeah"

"Bury your squirrel and let's continue hunting" *two hunters are better than one.*

"Mapleclaw?"

"Huh?" Turning back to face him

"I wanted to ask you about something, about the fire and the murders?" I froze quickly and panic rose in my paws.

Does he know something? He does doesn't he... he was acting weird when Patchfur hinted at the fire being started by a cat. But that wasn't

me!

"Do you think it was the same cat? I know you heard Patchfur at the gathering, and it has been bugging me lately"

"I mean, what cat would want to do all of this?" I laughed nervously. He gave me a weird look.

"Mapleclaw are you alright? You're shaking" the silver and brown cat sniffed me over.

"I-I am fine, just a little woozy" I lied.

"You sure?"

"I-I just get uncomfortable talking about the murders that's all. Since Dawndrop accused me of being the killer I get antsy"

"Understandable. Sorry I brought it up" Puddlesplash looked like he wanted to say more. To be honest I had more to say myself.

"Can I... also ask you some things?"

"Sure!"

"Why do you think Applestar picked Skyleaf over me or Foxhop?"

"They are kit hood best friends, like a certain pair I know" he said with a smile. He smiled softly at him and sighed.

"I guess I am just, disappointed in myself"

"About missing the squirrel catch?"

"About a lot of things" I looked at my paws. Above the clouds broke and it began to drizzle. "About not becoming deputy, about how bad of a mentor I am, about-"

"Mapleclaw you can't define your self by those things"

"But how can I not! All I have been doing is pushing it all deep down and trying to stay calm! I have been trying so hard to prove I can be a great deputy, and definitely a great leader one day, but I

keep getting held back!" He looked a little shocked at my yelling. "I am happy that Mothdust is a warrior! But I have all this self pressure and fear building up and just wished that become deputy would have helped subdue it, but I got over looked..."

"Do you remember that saying Pinestripe always told us when we were struggling with some thing as apprentices?"

"Analyze your problem, and take the next reasonable step forward" I smiled weakly at the memory of Wishstar's first deputy and mate, "I found it so annoying when he recited that over and over again"

"Figure out what is holding you back, and make the best choices to improve. What do you think is holding you back?"

My guilt... "It's my own emotions..." I half lied.

"Then maybe try airing them out more! To be truthful here this has been the first time in awhile since you talked to me about this stuff" Puddlesplash smiled. I smiled back. It felt we were kits again, with him comforting and giving me advice. *He always was the one calming me down when Breezeheat lectured me. Reassuring me I am good enough.* The ground below us began to shake lightly. Then it stopped, we looked around confused.

"What was that!?" I asked looking around for the cause.

"Maybe another small landslide" Puddlesplash tried to reason. We looked around in silence, just the light pitter patter of the rain hitting the dirt, leaves, and our pelts filling our ears. Then the ear splitting screech if Forestpaw calling out.

"Skyleaf! Dad!" We looked at each other and raced off to the sound of Forestpaws cried. When we found the mud covered apprentice she was by the Windclan border, right next to the creek shore looking down. A tree has fallen into the river with the roots uprooted. We stopped next to Forestpaw and followed her gaze, to our horror there was Skyleaf, laying in the very edge of the river we share with the moor. He was half crushed by the thick dead oak trunk, his rib cage looked partly crushed by the weight of the large tree. His blue eyes were already glazed over as he stared at

Forestpaw distantly. A small puddle of blood began to form from his mouth.

"Forestpaw..." Puddlesplash curled his tail around his apprentice and pulled her into his chest.

"I-I didn't listen... he-he told me to stay away from the river and I just ignored him an-and the dead tree-I-it started to fall and I froze and-and-an-" the silver apprentice couldn't finish her sentence as choked up and buried her head into her mentors fluffy chest. Puddlesplash looked mourningly at his old mentor as grief filled him. I dropped down and sniffed him.

Maybe... and but he wasn't. I turned to my wide eyed, almost tear filled, friend. "Take Forestpaw back to camp and tell everyone what happened. Bring some warrior back to help me get him out..." he nodded and guided his grief stricken apprentice back to camp. He stopped however and was looking at something next to the tree. Following his gaze I saw the paw prints that were left next to it, that lead to the dead tree and than back into the woods. Confused, I shook my head and ignored them. I looked down at Skyleaf's body again and felt some grief hit me, but not a whole lot. I sighed and began to dig at the dirt underneath him.

Chapter 24: Sagelight

I sat down wrapping my tail around Foxhop as we watched Ravenclaw and Rainstripe lay Skyleaf out below some shelter to prepare for tonight's vigil. Death seems to keep following us. Applestar looked at the body of his best friend and deputy with pain stricken amber eyes.

"Forestpaw isn't leaving Puddlesplash's side" Foxhop sadly observed. I followed his gaze to see the silver apprentice pushing herself into her mentors fur. Puddlesplash looked deeply sad for his old mentor but he looked he was trying to stay strong. Of course his different colored eyes were telling a different story. Forestpaw was still covered in mud. From what we know Skyleaf shoved her out of the way from a falling tree.
I sighed mournfully and watched my kin, Applestar, climb to highrock. The poor tom dragged his paws to the the edge and looked over the sad crowd.

"All warriors old enough to catch there own prey, join under high rock!"

"He already has a new deputy lined up?" Tanglestripe huffed, he sound slightly angry, "my son just died and he wants to make a deputy now?"

"He has to before moon high" Whiteleaf muttered, her voice was barely above a whisper. Her green eyes looked dazed as she stared off.

"Still..."

"I have decided on the new deputy!" Applestar glanced at Skyleafs body before looking back at his warriors, "I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirit of Skyleaf, may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Thunderclan is Foxhop!"

"Wait-" Foxhop looked up from his mopping and stared at Applestar

with a mixture of surprise and excitement. I nudged him forward and he went and sat before Applestar. After getting over the original shock, he bowed slightly and spoke.

"Thank you Applestar, I promise to serve my clan as deputy to the best of my ability"

"Foxhop! Foxhop! Foxhop!" I cheered with my clanmates, even if the cheer was filled with saddened voices it seemed the clan approved of the choice. I looked around to see Puddlesplash smiling sadly. He was happy for his brother. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Mapleclaw and turned my head to see her completely. Her hazel eyes were furiously ablaze and she had unsheathed her claws out of this rage. I took in a sharp intake of breath and wrapped my tail protectively around me. The sight of Mapleclaw this angry made me fearful for my life. *I have never seen a cat this angry since Yellowstar at gatherings.*

"Looks like our kits are gonna have a deputy as a father" Foxhop said, coming back to my side after Applestar ended the meeting. I looked back at him and he saw the fear in my eyes. "Is something wrong Sagelight?"

"I-I-" I whipped my head back to look at Mapleclaw who had disappeared.

"Sagelight?" I shook my head and gave my mate a fake smile.

"Nothing, just thought I saw something" *Mapleclaw won't do anything. She wouldn't hurt a clan mate of hers.* I walked beside Foxhop towards the nursery. "Hey shouldn't you go do deputy stuff?"

"Oh yeah...I'll check with your dad to see who Skyleaf had set up for dusk and night patrol" Foxhop quickly bounded off towards Smokefoot. I entered the nursery to warm up. The coming of rain always made me feel colder. Curling up in my nest I saw Dawndrop enter and give me a small smile.

"Cold?" Dawndrop mewed quietly.

"Yeah" I answered.

"Have you been thinking about your kits?" The orangey cream cat asked.

"Of course! I am hoping to have one as fluffy as me" I joked.

"I would think so, as your mates father and litter mates were incredibly fluffy cats" Dawndrop laughed a little.

"Do you miss having Flutterpaw and Sycamorepaw?" I asked kindly. Dawndrop face fell for a second before warming up into a sad but still proud and joyful face.

"My nest feels empty, but that doesn't mean I am not proud of who my kits are becoming. I was very surprised when Applestar gave Flutterpaw to Coppernose to mentor"

"I know it's still a long ways off before my kits come but I want Puddlesplash to mentor one of them"

"He is an amazing mentor... just like Skyleaf..." Dawndrop mumbled.

"I hope Forestpaw doesn't blame herself" I added. *Or her other littermates, I don't want them to cut her out.*

"She will for awhile, but she'll make it through. Silverfeather and Puddlesplash will make sure of it"

"Did any cat help you when... you know..."

"Orchidfrost did, I know most of her kin think she isn't a very kind cat but she has a lot of love in her heart. She just was suffering from something we know nothing of when she had Cardinalrush and Mothdust"

"Suffering from what?"

"Her own emotions" Dawndrop stated, "at least every Queen goes through it just a little, if not a lot. Queens that feel useless and no good mothers. Like they aren't adequate or caring, it manifests

differently in every Queen. Some cats are strong enough to break through it, others sometimes aren't"

"I know I am more than enough to raise my kits, with Foxhop here at least"

"Oh don't you worry, Foxhop is gonna overwhelm those kits with so much love and care they won't know what it's like not to have that much" Dawndrop laughed. I laughed too. "Though with how big you are I am guessing it isn't gonna be a small litter"

"Moonwater says she could feel at least three"

"There is definitely more than three my dear" Dawndrop said, getting up to feel. She paused her movements though. "May I feel? I know some are a little uncomfortable with other cats touching them"

"No, go ahead! I wouldn't mind an experienced Queen such as yourself touching my belly" I rolled over a little bit. She lived closer and pressed her paw against my belly. Felling around for the little ones.

"See, I'd say you have at least four, maybe five"

"Oh Starclan... five?"

"Thunderclan cats are known to have big litters" Dawndrop joked.

Chapter 25: Puddlesplash

I woke up in my nest the Warriors den. I yawned and looked around, but no one was in here. The den was filled with the familiar soft golden light I remember from another more terrifying dream. I blinked some more and worriedly stood up.

I am in another weird dream aren't I?! I began to look around crazily waiting for waves of blood to come crashing around. But nothing happened, just the same comfortable warm feeling it was before the blood happened. *Okay, if I move then my real body moves. So I should just stay here so I don't want anyone to know I sleep walk.* I closed my eyes tightly and just tried to wake up. When I opened them again I was still in the dream Warriors den. I groaned and sat there till I naturally wake up. It felt for forever till I heard screaming outside. My fur spiked up in reaction to the loud screaming outside and tried to keep myself from running after it. *It's just a dream, just a dream, just a dream, just a dream.* I laid back down and covered my ears with my paws while also closing my eyes. *Why does it sound like Sagelight?!* The desperate screaming started to become louder and louder to the point it sounded like it was pounding in my head.

"Puddlesplash" said a different voice, the same me one from the first dream. Some how I could hear the cat over the screaming echoes of Sagelight. "Puddlesplash!" They yelled louder.

"Leave me alone... please..." I pleaded as I felt my self shake from the violent screaming.

"Puddlesplash!" I definitely recognized that voice. The cat from the last dream.

"Please just go away!" I called out, but no answer. The only thing I could hear was the screaming. I shakily got to my paws and walked to the entrance of the den. I couldn't see outside as this bright gold light blocked it. The screaming just became this ground shaking, high pitch noise that no longer sounded like Sagelights. The sound became so much as I got closer to the exit that I collapsed and saw

only darkness. As I drifted in this darkness, my head feeling like it needed to a split open and ringing in my ears, I felt someone shake my side. Then suddenly I felt nothing and I fell unconscious completely.

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The smell of herbs hit my nose as I gained consciousness. I groaned as pictured what most likely happened.

Rushfire must have brought me here after he noticed me doing that dream stuff again. I open my eyes slowly and saw Coldhearts paws inches from my nose. I laughed and slowly lifted my head to see him.

"I bet you can guess what happened?" I said jokingly. He grunted and dropped some herbs at my paws.

"You won't believe what happened" the old medicine cat said a I chowed down on some bitter herbs. After I was done I looked up at him.

"What do you mean?"

"You caused the entire camp to shake with that screaming, the screaming that sounded like Sagelight even though it was obvious she wasn't"

"Wait, does-"

"No one knows you caused it but me, Applestar, and those who know about your weird dreams"

"Thank Starclan"

"Starclan needs to stop sending you signs" Coldheart hissed. I took a few steps back and laid down across from me. "What happened in you dream?"

"Shouldn't we wait for Applestar too?"

"I'll repeat the story" Coldheart stared at me with his emotionless

blue eyes. I sighed as I remembered that painful dream. My head began to ache just thinking about it.

"Well, the dream started with me waking up in the Warriors den" I started, "I could tell it was the odd dream thing so I decided to stay put cause I didn't want to alarm anyone"

"So you were aware it was the dream?"

"Yeah"

"Alright, continue"

"After awhile the screaming started and, like you said, sounded like Sagelight" I stopped and shook the pain in my head away. "The screaming just continued to get louder and painful to listen to. That was when the voice from last time began to speak"

"Okay" Coldheart nodded as he followed along with me retelling of that horrible dream.

"He was just calling out to me, but I was in so much pain from the screaming I just yelled at him to leave"

"You sure it was the same cat from last time?"

"I think I could recognize his voice" I said a little annoyed. He shrugged as I rolled my eyes and continued. "I guess he did leave me alone and the screaming just kept going and going till I fell unconscious from the pounding pain"

"You were bleeding from your nose and ears when Rushfire brought you in, guess it was a lot worse in the dream then what the clan heard"

"What do they think it was?"

"A really aggressive owl is the story I am going with"

"I didn't get a prophecy or anything, but why send me the dream anyway?"

"It was a vision. Prophecies are what could happen, omens are what will happen, and a vision is the most cryptic could or will happen scenario"

"So what does a really loud screaming Sagelight mean?" I knew the meaning deep down.

"She is having a larger than common litter" Coldheart gave me a knowing look

"Don't say it"

"She may-"

"Coldheart!" Moonwaters frantic calling interrupted him. We turned to the entrance to see the dark grey tabby painting hard and looking panicked. "It's Sagelight, she is going into labor!"

"Now?!" Coldheart got up and bolted out of the medicine cat den following Moonwater.

"Wait!" I yelled and tried to get up, but I my legs began to shake and I collapsed back into the nest. After a few moments Applestar entered the den looking confused.

"What's going on?"

"Sagelight, she might die in labor, that's what the dream was about!" I frantically told him trying to stand up but the tiredness and pain I was still in kept me from getting up.

"Puddlesplash calm down, I'll go get Rushfire to keep you company and send a cat out to look for Foxhop"

"But-" he left before I could protest. Soon after though Rushfire came in worried.

"Puddlesplash you have to rest"

"But Sagelight- the dream..."

"She will be fine, we got two excellent medicine cats" he said. After

my third failed attempt to stand successfully I subsided and laid down, tears streaming down my face. Rushfire laid next to me and began to lick my head in an attempt to comfort.

"I-I feel so useless"

"You aren't useless, at least Sagelight is being taken care of and cats are looking for Foxhop"

"No... no the dream was about Sagelight being in labor"

"All that screaming really was dream her?" He sounded as worried as I did. I nodded my head as I held back a crying whimper.

"Why send me a dream when I don't have time to take action? Useless, useless, useless..."

"Hey, stop that" the red tabby snacked by lightly on the head. "That kind of talk won't help any cat, now go back to sleep" I considered it and nodded again in agreement. I rested my head on my paws and closed my eyes, focusing on listening to Rushfires breathing to hopefully calm me down. I laid with my eyes closed but unable to really rest with the thoughts running through my head.

"Puddlesplash..." said a indifferent voice. I opened my eyes and looked up at the entrance to see my father, Sparrowscar, looking distraught and heartbroken.

"What is wrong?" I shakily got up. Rushfire also got up to support me, making sure my weight was on him and not entirely on my weakened body.

"Foxhop... he is-he- he is dead..."

"What?" Rushfire curled his tail around shoulder me. I stared at my dad with disbelief. My mouth opened to respond but only silence came out.

This has to be joke right? Foxhop can't be dead! He was-Sparrowscar he can't be...

"He disappeared to investigate the tree that fell on Skyleaf, and on

Smokefoots way to go and get him he found Foxhop's body..." Sparrowscar eyes fell as his sentence trailed off.

"He-he can't be-" I felt myself sway as I forced myself to stand on my paws. I pushed past Sparrowscar and through the tendrils. My eyes quickly adjusted the light of sun high and there, in the clearing, was Foxhop's body. Smokefoot was panicking between the nursery and the body. Applestar stood there in disbelief as cats began to murmur and mourn more.

"Puddlesplash, go back to the medicine cat den" Applestar said, noticing me and trying to push me back. I tried to fight back but I was shaking violently. Rushfire came to Applestars side and helped him put me back into my nest.

"He-h-he can't be dead..." I muttered as I collapsed into my nest in the medicine cat den. Sagelights cries of labor breaking the silence.

Chapter 26: Mapleclaw

I had washed my paws in the river we share with Windclan. Foxhop's blood that stuck itself to my fur washed off and muddled itself with the clear water before ultimately disappearing entirely. I check myself for any wounds, but thankfully he just took some fur.

Oh Starclan... please forgive me... I thought as I pictured his bloody body in my mind again. I was surprised how quickly I took him down since I will admit Foxhop was a great fighter. *Puddlesplash is gonna hate me when he finds out... but what else did I have left to try?! Foxhop has no sense of grounded leadership!* I tried to argue in my head. I walked off into the woods and found the mouse I caught and took it back to camp as an excuse for what I was doing. As I walked my ears picked up crying from the direction of camp, or a mixture of crying and screaming really. *Did they find his body already?* I ran the rest of the way back to camp in a panic. After entering I quickly spotted Foxhop's body, with Rainstripe standing over it mournfully. The crying screaming combo was coming from the nursery. Kinda sounded like Sagelight.

"Mapleclaw!" Orchidfrost said, walking over briskly. I forced the groan I had coming up down and gave my sister a small smile. "Poor Sagelight..."

"What is wrong?" I asked dropping my mouse. *Is Foxhop's death really causing her to sound like that?*

"She is having her kits early and now Foxhop.." she trailed off and looked at the body. I pulled my ears back in surprise and looked back at the nursery.

I didn't know she was having kits today! Foxdung! I wouldn't have killed Foxhop today if I knew that! "Is she gonna be okay?" I asked concerned.

"I hope she will, but Moonwater said it's getting really bloody..."

Fox dung! Fox dung! Fox dung!

"Puddlesplash is taking it even harder. Looks like that screaming bird last night was an omen like everyone thought"

Fox dung! Fox dung! Fox dung! I panicked and guilt built up even more.

***

Dusk was almost over when Sagelight stopped screaming. A litter of five kits, or at least four alive kits and one dead one. Many cats were getting ready for tonight's vigil, but rumors were starting to spiral around.

"Do you think Foxhop was killed by the cat who killed Petalclaw and Pineclaw?" I heard Iceeye discuss with Coppernose.

"The position of deputy seems to be cursed..." Silverfeather hissed. She must have been thinking about Skyleaf as she said that.

"Poor Sagelight" Dawndrop muttered.

"Who is gonna be deputy now?" Branchtail asked Darkcloud.

"They better be prepared to die it seems" Darkcloud responded.

"Mapleclaw?" Mothdusts voice shook me out of ears. I looked over at my old apprentice.

"What?"

"This feels like Petalclaw and Pineclaw all over again"

"Don't remind me" I mumbled. I looked over at Foxhop's body and grimaced at my actions yet again. My eyes drifted from the orange tabby's body to the medicine cat den. Puddlesplash hasn't left the cave since he came out to see his brothers body the one time from what Cardinalrush said. *I am sorry Puddlesplash, I let my hatred and anger and jealous bubble up and hurt you...*

"All warriors old enough to catch their own prey, join under high

rock!" We all looked up at Applestar once he called our attention. I stood up a little taller as I prepared myself in case I am called. "I must make a new deputy, to which I feel reluctant to do"

"He could wait, we would all understand if he wait till tomorrow" Ravenclaw reasoned

"That would be against the warrior code" Rainstripe said, almost choking.

"I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirit of Foxhop may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Thunderclan is Mapleclaw" I looked up surprised. The guilt left my mind as joy of the achievement I long awaited was called out. I walked over before my leader and bowed. I put on a sad smile as I did. "I do accept, and hope that I live up to the standard Foxhop and Skyleaf had set"

"Mapleclaw! Mapleclaw! Mapleclaw!"

Chapter 28: Sagelight

I shifted in my nest as I felt little bundles squirm at my side. I opened my eyes and tried to shift to see them but I felt so tired that all I could do was open my eyes. I looked around to the best of my ability but the only cats I saw wears Dawndrop and Neville. The dim moonlight from outside glinted on the fallen leaves in the clearing. The air that slowly filtered in from the outside was a little cold but nothing unbearable.

Where was Foxhop? I forced myself to get up which caused one of the kits I haven't seen yet to see let go and mew loudly. Puddlesplash groaned and I finally noticed he was asleep in a nest next to me. He quickly looked over to see me trying to get up.

"Sagelight?" He said tiredly. That dream stuff hit him hard again but he seemed okay at least.

"Puddlesplash where is Foxhop?" I asked hoarsely. My throat felt dry and achey. Puddlesplash pinned his ears back when I asked. He got up from his nest in his own shaker way and came over to lay in front of me. The mourning in his two different colored eyes was all that I needed. "Where is-"

"I am sorry Sagelight" I felt myself want to cry out again, but from sorrow rather than pain. I forced myself not to and just silently weeped into my paws. I curled my tail around my four bundles and cried harder. "He was found dead by... on the way to the tree that crushed Skyleaf... cat claw marks and bite wounds... I am so so sorry Sagelight"

"He-he never got to see them..." I sobbed quietly.

"Do you need food or water?" Puddlesplash asked. He was so ready to care for me it hurt even more.

"I-I want Foxhop" I muttered. I continued to cry as Puddlesplash tiredly got up and left the nursery. After awhile of me sobbing, he

came back with soaking moss. As he moved away from the entrance towards me, another shadow appeared to block the moonlight. I recognized the outline of my father as he rushed over to comfort me, curling himself against my back. Puddlesplash placed the wet moss in front of me and silently watched over me as my dad licked my fur. All I could do was weep as they took care of me. Puddlesplash swayed a little from exhaustion but he sat there ready to do as I asked. After a longer time, I stopped crying and was just sniffling but the pain in my chest was still their. Everyone outside must have been doing vigil for my mate while I was in here. I finally removed my tail from my kits and looked over at them. For a moment the grief melted away as joy overfilled me. My four kits were small, born to early, but three were very lively as the squirmed for food. The fourth, closest to my front, was a little weaker but beautiful none the less.

"They are beautiful kits Sagelight" Puddlesplash congratulated me. I licked the closest one as he did so. The weakest right now, a she-cat, was the same dark brown color like me with four white paws. She wasn't a tabby and was the smallest, but was pretty. The next kit was a silver speckled she-kit like Foxhop's mother Spottedsnow. She had a dark grey stripe running from forehead to tail tip just like his mother too. The third was a ginger tabby tom with two white paws and two dark paws. The tom kit had tabby marking just like mine and he was the second biggest of the bunch. The last one was also the loudest. She was a light tabby brown kit and had tabby marking similar to Foxhop's, just sharper. As the light brown kit squeaked, my father picked her up and placed her between my paws. Out of instinct I began to lick her and she quieted down.

"She is feisty" Smokefoot commented quietly. Puddlesplash went back to his nest and curled up to fall asleep. I felt exhaustion grip at me again and I slowly fell back to sleep with Smokefoot I watching over me.

***

I woke up with a jolt, my head moving up fast and my eyes going wide. Little tears were at the edge of my vision as I woke up my kits as well. They mewed, the one she-kit sounding like a bird. My father woke up with my sudden movement, blinking sleep from his

eyes.

"What-what is wrong?"

"Dad-" I started, but I stopped myself. "Nothing, just a sad dream"

"Do you need anything?" He asked with a yawn.

"Umm-"

"Sorry dad, but I am ahead of you on that" Springtail said through a mouth full of mouse. My younger sister came over and dropped it at my paws. Hungrily I dove right in and devoured it quickly.

"Thanks Springtail" I said as I looks back at my kits. The dark brown one was moving less than last night and I pulled my ears back. *Don't leave me yet! Please...*

"Have you given them names yet?" Springtail asked as she sniffed her new kin.

"They were just born yesterday" Smokefoot said. My sister huffed indignantly but gently spoke.

"I know but-"

"I do have names Springtail" I said, sounding a little sadder than I meant. I shook my head and scolded myself. *Don't grieve for too long, you can't let your kits down.*

"You did?" My sister looked ecstatic, but kept her voice calm.

"Yep, the orange tabby tom will be Eaglekit" I said, pointing with my tail. "Then the silver dapple she-kit will be Ashenkit"

"The name I gave you!" My sister stuck her to tongue out at our dad as she glared at her. "What about the other two?"

"Plumkit for the smallest and-" the light brown tabby kit mewed loudly again before suddenly calming down, making us all laugh. "And Screechkit for the loud one"

"Awwwww!" Springtail couldn't help herself.

"They are beautiful" Smokefoot said getting up. "We should let Sagelight spend time with her kits, come on Springtail"

"Okay" she said surprisingly. My sister looked down at me and smiled. "I can't wait to see how they grow up!"

"Me too" I smiled sadly. *I still wish Foxhop could see them. Starclan why did you take him...*

"See you later Sagelight!" And they left. Once they did my smile fell and I looked down at my kits. Joy and pain filling my inside up.

Chapter 29: Mapleclaw

"Smokefoot, you'll lead a patrol on the Windclan border with Nightrain, Blizzardpaw, and Springtail" Smokefoot nodded and left to gather the cats. I looked around the small group of cats and spotted another one to lead a patrol. "Silverfeather, I want you to take your apprentice, Orchidfrost, and Slatefoot"

"Okay" she nodded. She looked a little displeased but I ignored it.

"Can I lead a hunting patrol?" Branchtail asked. I looked over at the brown tabby.

"Yeah, bring along Tanglestripe, Jaggedpaw, and Puddlesplash, and Forestpaw" the tabby smiled and went off to gather those cats. I turned to the rest of the mentors. "The rest of you can go to battle practice"

"Actually," Coppernose started. I whipped my head around and looked at him a little confused. "Flutterpaw is gonna be doing some chores around camp, the elders have been complaining about old moss"

"Oh, alright" *Damm nabbit! I keep forgetting about chore duties*. "You can go hunting later than with your apprentices"

"See you later Mapleclaw" I bowed back and Coppernose left. I sighed and looked around camp. *Might as well relax, Puddlesplash says should try to.*

"Mapleclaw! Can I talk to you?" Applestar called out. I looked up at highrock and he sat on the edge. It was hard to tell if he was upset since he was emotionless from this distance. Confused I walked up and rocks to get to him. I was confused as to why he wanted to talk. I sat next to him and watched his face more closely now. The cream tabby was a little disappointed and that just made more confused and nervous.

"What is wrong?"

"None of the apprentices have been doing chores Mapleclaw, and when I asked all the mentors they confirmed that you were lying about other apprentices doing said chores"

"I just realized that, so Flutterpaw is doing moss nest duty right now. My bad"

"Chores are to establish connections and responsibilities for apprentices, please be mindful of that" Applestar said sternly. I was surprised by his tone, it was less friendly.

"I am sorry, I promise to do more involving chores" bowed slightly.

"I also want to talk to you about certain things, ones I had to ask Puddlesplash for permission for" he said, nodding to his den for more privacy. I pinned my ears back and followed inside.

What is this about? My leader sat down as I entered. Taking a few more steps in I sat down as well.

"As my deputy, I need to advise you in issues involving prophecies, threats, and special cats. Puddlesplash has been having dreams over these few moons that leave him physically drained and have also caused things to happen in the real world"

"How long has this been going on?" I was concerned, and a little hurt. *I mean, he has had weird trips to the medicine cat den. Why didn't he tell me himself?*

"Started before the fire, his first one was pretty rough on him"

"How many has he had?"

"Only one other, and it sadly had already happened..." Applestar said sadly. "Even more depressing, the first prophecy hasn't been fulfilled at all"

"What does the prophecy foretell?" the worry in my chest building as this conversation continues.

"Blood of your blood will be spilled, and the darkness within the storm shall not be stopped until the lake is thick with it" Applestar recited.

"It sounds like Starclan is talking to Puddlesplash specifically, is it his responsibility to save us?"

"I don't know, in truth the only thing we connected to it is that his father is also involved, but since Foxhop's death I am unsure now" He sighed and looked away, completely ignoring me stiffening.

Was I suppose to kill Foxhop? What if-

"Anyway, the whole 'threat in the storm' and 'lake turning red with blood' has all of us stumped"

"Are you not worried about solving it now? It could happen at any moment? What if it's talking about war, or disease, or something worse?"

"Oh Starclan..." he pulled his ears back and shook his head slightly. "Can't the clans have some time of peace"

"Shouldn't we go to the moonpool? Or ask Puddlesplash to try and have more visions? Why isn't this at the top of your list? For all we know the whole turning the lake red with blood part has me wondering how many cats will die?"

"We can't just ask Puddlesplash's to control his powers! He barely seems to understand them himself! And they physically hurt him, and they affect the real world in some way! We could put him and our clan mates in danger"

"Yes but-"

"Our job is to solve the prophecy, not go looking for more answers when Starclan won't give them"

"Yes sir..." I reluctantly agreed.

"I just wanted to bring you into the situation Mapleclaw. Don't go bothering Puddlesplash about his gift alright? He hates himself

more than he should over it..." he dismissed me with a flick of his tail and I dragged my paws out of the leaders den. On my way down back into the main clearing angry thoughts ran through my head.

How is he so unbothered by this? The clan could be in danger by this darkness in the storm! Puddlesplash could be in danger by it! He could die! My best friend could be kil-

"Mapleclaw?" I stopped and whipped my head up to glare at the cat. My gaze didn't soften when I saw my sister, really I think my temper spiked up higher.

"What do you want?" I spat. She flinched and pulled her ears back. Orchidfrost looked a little to the side, wrapping her tail around her paws. She clenched her jaws and shut her eyes before lifting her head with spite.

"You know what, I am done with this! I have been trying so hard to make up for everything cause I love you! You are my sister, my littermate! But you keep holding the fact I had kits with- Ugh- with him over my head! You love my daughters yet you despise me! Starclan above only knows how many snide remarks and verbal abuse I have endured from you!"

"You shou-"

"No! I had depression! I hated myself! Something you didn't help with when you would berate me and would treat me horribly!" She sighed and looked away. "I came here to tell you I am pregnant with Branchtails kits, but I guess sibling love is something you don't have anymore" she left me standing in the warriors den surprised. Her words settled in. And once again guilt did too.

Chapter 30: Sagelight

"Yargh!" Screechkit yowled as she tackled Eaglekit. Eaglekit grumbled as his bigger littermate tried to pin him. He pawed at his sisters face to try to get her off. I was laying in some shade watching my kits play, or at least three of them while Plumkit places herself far away from them.

"You're not playing right! We are suppose to be chasing the mossball not eachother" Ashenkit groaned dismissively. I laughed as Ashenkit rolled her eyes and brought the ball to Plumkit. My littlest kit sat quietly to the side as she hated playing rough. "Could you throw this for me Plumkit?" Ashenkit asked dropping it at the brown she-kits tiny paws.

"Ok, just don't tackle me please" Plumkit chirped before hooking the ball with her little white claws. Ashenkit smiled and crouched down ready to chase the moss ball once it was thrown. Eaglekit and Screechkit had somehow managed to get half way across the clearing with their rough housing. I paused and watched them, my incrediblely jumbled mother thoughts bouncing around in my head.

Should I go get them? Maybe they are playing too rough? Do cats think I am a bad mom? Ashenkit bolted across the clearing before I could even spot the mossball landing. She leaped onto what I guess is the ball before looking up triumphantly.

"Mom! Did you see how fast I ran?"

"Yep! You where super duper fast!"

"Argh!" Coldheart hissed. I looked over to see my wrestling kits running away from the old medicine cat. Coldheart glared at them before glaring at me. "Your kits need to be more careful Sagelight!"

"Coldheart be nice!" Moonwater hissed at her fellow cat. Her head poked out of the elders den. Coldheart grumbled before wandering off to his medicine cat den. Moonwater shook her head and then

turned to me with big smile. It wasn't a playful one, more like a 'You're having a rough time' one instead. I smiled weakly back.

I don't need sympathy...I just need help... I got up with stretch. "Alrighty, lets go play in the nursery"

"Aww, but there is more room out here!" Eaglekit complained.

"Then maybe you two should have played mossball with me instead of getting into trouble" Ashenkit glared at her only brother.

"I don't wanna play a game where Screechkit cheats!"

"I didn't cheat first! You tried tripping me so I just got you back!" I sighed as my the three of them began to bicker.

"Kits, please stop- it is getting-"

"Mommy I am hungry" Plumkit mumbled as she leaned into my side.

"I know sweetie, I'll feed you guys soon"

"Argh! You have a stick up your butt Ashenkit!" Screechkit spat.

"At least I follow the rules Screechkit!"

"Kits! Enough!" I hissed sternly. The three squabbling shut up quickly at my irritation. "We are going to the nursery and we are gonna to eat and settle down for awhile" I guided them to the nursery with my tail. I could hear them arguing at each other in whispered tones but I didn't care right now. I sighed and looked at the sky as my kits went into the nursery. *Why do they have to argue so much...* I thought as I watched some small fluffy clouds roll in. The sky was bright blue and the breeze carried a crisp cold feeling with it. Even with leaves still falling from last the stone hollow leaf-bare was getting closer. I wouldn't be surprised if we had snow soon.

"Mom!" Eaglekit cried out, "Screechkit clawed me!"

"No I didn't!"

"Yes you did!" Ashenkit chirpped up

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

I sighed and walked into the nursery. "Eaglekit are you bleeding?"

***

My kits were in a sleeping jumbled mess, except for Plumkit sleeping off to the side. I stealthily got up and away from them. I left the nursery and quickly took a sigh of relief. I took a seat and looked around camp. Cats where coming back from hunting and border patrols. I saw Pumpkinpaw come running into camp with a large bird. I had never noticed before but the white and orange tabby had long legs like Rushfire. No wonder he caught that bird, he is such a Skyclan cat.

Eaglekit is spunky like Foxhop was... I thought of my little ginger son. *But Screechkit has his energy. Plumkit is no where like me or Foxhop, even Ashenkit is different.* I looked down at my paws, shaking my head. *Stop it... you promised.*

"Sagelight?" Applestar mew echoed in my ears. I quickly looked up and pricked my ears. The cream tabby was watching me with concern with his large amber eyes.

"Applestar?! Wh-"

"You look tired, don't you wanna go and sleep?"

"I really shouldn't, if I sleep now I'll be up all night" I laughed anxiously. *Do I look that disheveled?*

"Well, you can always ask Dawndrop if you need help with your kits" he sat next to me. I didn't even bother looking at him.

"It-it's not that... however Screechkit does snores" we both laughed a little. "I have been struggling with a dilemma and it's keeping me up"

"Wanna talk to me about it? I am your leader so I could give you some insight". I hesitated as the thoughts started running again. Applestar could tell and sighed. "Is it about me?"

"No-no..." we sat in silence as my thought went as fast as the wind. *Should I tell him about my suspicion? I haven't even tried getting between Puddlesplash and Mapleclaw but I don't even know if she is 'the' cat. But I mean... it's no coincidence that her anger I saw the day Foxhop became deputy and he says a moon later. But what about Pineclaw and Petalclaw? I mean it's obvious the three murders are connected, even if the one out of the three is distant in compared to time. Mapleclaw blames Pineclaw for her mother's death, but her killing Petalclaw doesn't make sense. Then there is the issue of red fur found in Pineclaws claws, I mean Mapleclaw is a red cat! Also Mapleclaw was the last cat to have seen Petalclaw alive so she could have lied. You know what! Applestar deserves to hear my thoughts...*

"You are reminding me of Puddlesplash" Applestars voice pierced my thoughts again. I clenched my jaws and shut my eyes tightly, preparing what I was about to say.

I am accusing the deputy of murder! I am insane!

"Sage-"

"I think Mapleclaw did it" I whispered.

"Huh?"

"I think Mapleclaw killed Foxhop, and Pineclaw, and maybe even Petalclaw". I looked up at my leader and he was slightly stunned. I can't tell if it's good stunned or bad stunned. *Is there a good stunned?*

"Sagelight that is a strong accusation, I am all for you figuring your own grief out but blaming our deputy is absurd"

"This isn't grief Applestar, please you have to believe me" I pleaded quietly.

"Mapleclaw was my first apprentice, she has shown to put her clanmates first, and everyone has a temper" Applestar shook his head. "I'll let you be Sagelight, but don't go blaming your clanmates for something none of them would do" Applestar got up and left me sitting their in utter sadness.

If Applestar doesn't believe me then no one would... I don't think Puddlesplash would either... I held back the pain in my chest and was about to enter the nursery again when I spotted Coldheart out of the corner of my eye standing nearby. He was watching me with trust. *Wait, does Coldheart believe me?* Above thunder could be overheard and I flicked my ears. *Another storm... the land flood...*

Chapter 31: Puddlesplash

Tanglestripe has a bit of a cough this morning, and to make sure it wasn't greencough Moonwater had him stay in camp for the rest of the day. So I volunteered to help Jaggedpaw with his apprentice chores today. I was scrapping a bit of moss of the tree stump and listening to Jaggedpaw mumble.

"Stupid moss... why do I have to...battle training..." the apprentice kept trailing off as he scrapped at the moss. I stifled a laugh as it reminded me of Mapleclaw when the two of us were apprentices. A memory flashed across my vision of the time when we started throwing moss at each other, and Skyleaf and Applestar ended up joining too. Ravenclaw was so annoyed. I smiled to myself and placed the moss I just scrapped off into the small pile we had made.

"I think this is enough Jaggedpaw, we should head back"

"Finally!" Jaggedpaw groaned. The spiked apprentice grabbed a bit of the moss in his mouth before I did. I grabbed the rest and the two of us walked back to camp. Above I heard a distant clap of thunder and I shuddered a little at the thought of cold rain. "I hate storms" Jaggedpaw muttered through his moss.

"A lot of cats do" I replied. I couldn't help but glance at the young tom. His green eyes weren't filled with spite, hate, or even irritation, but clouded sadness. *I wonder how much he remembers? He was still young enough to be forgetful.* Jaggedpaw stopped and dropped moss. I stopped and turned myself to face the apprentice. "Jaggedpaw?" I asked after dropping my moss.

"Dad doesn't talk about dad... about Luckywish" I pinned my ears back a little. "And Tanglestripe tells me the bare minimum... I guess they both miss dad too much to talk about him..."

"They cared a lot about your dad" Jaggedpaw looked at me quickly.

"What was dad like? You were his litter mate, so you must have fun

stories and-" he stopped quickly, "Sorry, I bet you don't wanna talk about him either". He looked at the moss at his paws. I felt an urge to cuddle the spiky mess of a cat, even if he protested. My parent senses were kicking in again.

"I would love to talk to you about your dad" I said softly, Jaggedpaw looked up at me again with happy surprise. I couldn't stop myself from smiling encouragingly at him.

"Could you tell me a story now?"

"Well-"

"Please!"

"Hehe okay" I looked up at the tree branches above me. The mixture of branches swayed in the strong leaf-fall wind as I thought of story. One quickly came to mind and I laughed.

"What so funny?"

"Here, I'll tell ya" I sat down and he did too. "When we were about 7 moons old we went out hunting by ourselves as young rebellious apprentices do. We were walking for a bit trying to find a place to start hunting when Foxhop stopped and looked up into a tree. Your dad and I stopped out of confusion as Foxhop stared up into the tree with a determination. He stated 'Look guys! There is a big black bird'. Your dad went 'Really?'" I laughed as my memory flashed ahead the end. "Well, your dad ended up trying to climb the tree looking for the black bird and but got stuck between two branches. His butt was hanging down"

Jaggedpaw laughed a little, "I bet you two started panicking"

"Oh we definitely started to! I ended up running back to camp to get help with Foxhop pleading because he didn't want to get into trouble" Jaggedpaw and I started laughing. He stopped and smiled at me.

"Can I tell this story to Blizzardpaw?"

"Of course" I smiled at him before picking up the moss again. He did

too and as we finished our trek back to camp he had a little spring in his step. It felt good to help Jaggedpaw. He was rough around the edge but once you got past that he was a happy cat. We entered camp and another clap of distant thunder could be heard.

"Should we be worried about the storm?" Jaggedpaw asked nervously. I looked up at the sky as sun high was reaching its head and the colors slowly began to drift into sun set. There were a few white fluffy clouds drifting by fast but no large storm cloud. I looked back at the black cat and shook my head.

"No, I think it's just gonna pass us"

"You sure?"

"No, but could just be a normal storm" Jaggedpaw shook his head and left to the elders den to give Rainstripe and Ravenclaw their new moss. I sighed and walked off towards the medicine cat den. Coldheart wanted some of this moss for his stores. I pushed myself through the tendrils and my eyes quickly adjusted to the dark den. I blinked a little and looked around for the black medicine cat. He was off to the side sniffing his herbs stores for bad herbs. "Coldheart?" I asked through the moss. The medicine cat flicked his ear in acknowledgment and continuing his chore. I placed the moss into a store and looked at Coldheart again. "Do you need anything else?"

"I have a question for you" Coldheart said, not giving eye contact.

"What do ya wanna ask me?" I sat down. I liked being in here, the smell of herbs prickled my nose always made me calm.

"I haven't been honest with you," he sighed, stopping what he was as doing. Coldheart still wasn't making eyes contact. He just sat there looking at the wall with distant sight. "When you were a kit still, I went to the moonpool looking for answers"

"I-I think I remember that" I thought, the images of memory where blurry in my head. I was very young still when he did.

"Starclan told me that I needed to take you on as an apprentice, but

I refused... I mean it is obvious that I didn't"

"So-wait...what? I was suppose to be your apprentice? I was suppose to be a medicine cat?!" I was shocked. My eyes went wide and I took a small sharp intake of breath. "Why?"

"Why? Cause I despise Starclan... a powerful mysterious force that clearly can see the future yet gives us cryptic prophecies and signs that most are figured out too late. A group of dead cats who has sudden say so over the living" he grumbled. He turned his head away from me as he avoided eye contact. "I didn't take you on out of spite and because you wanted to be a warrior apprentice, and I believe I made the right choice". I sat there in silence. My mouth open like fish as I tried to take hold of what I was just told. "They gave you a powerful gift just to make you a medicine cat. They were planning on dictating your life by giving you your powers"

"You-you knew I had powers since I was a kit?"

"Mostly I was just waiting for your powers to show up, though I did see a small glimpse of it when you were a kit" Coldheart chuckled. He stopped and finally made eye contact with me. The toms soft blue eyes that were usually cold and irritated were instead soft and apologetic. "I am sorry I did that, I have felt the guilt of acting just like Starclan and not letting you make your own choice in the matter. I will understand if you think less-"

"I don't Coldheart" I interrupted after finally gathering my thoughts. "Really, I bet I would have chosen the path of a warrior on my own"

"Heh" Coldheart made a small smile. That smile was so rare for Coldheart. It wasn't sarcastic or a smirk but actually genuine. As quickly as the smile appeared it had disappeared and Coldheart had went back to checking his herb stores. "Now get out of here, I got a lot of work"

Chapter 32: Mapleclaw

The frozen rain drizzled down onto my fur. It wasn't raining hard right now, but the distant thunder hinted towards a worse storm.

How is there a thunder storm in leafbare?I think I would prefer a small flurry of snow then freezing rain. I thought as I had dropped off the bird I had caught on my personal hunting patrol. I noticed that the fresh kill pile was a little smaller, but still plentiful, as the bird landed with a stiff flop on top and realized how lucky we are that leaf-fall is being this kind right now. *Or it is just softening us up for something worse in leaf bare? Ugh... I hope not.*

"Hey Mapleclaw! You should head to the warriors den!" Applestar called out from high rock. "Any cat could catch a cold in this frozen rain!"

"Got it Applestar!" I called back. *I know that you mousebrain!* I grumbled in my head. I trotted off to the warriors den to take shelter, like all the warriors. Other than one border patrol, almost all the warriors were in the den. I maneuvered around talking and sleeping clan mates and tiredly slumped into my nest. I didn't want to sleep so I decided to think about what still needed to be done today. *Dawndrop said there was a little weak spot in the nursery she was wondering if we could fix. Tomorrow I'll send a mentor and apprentice to get some more bracken for it. If the fresh kill pile is getting smaller I should start sending out more hunting patrols. I should also get an apprentice to help Coldheart and Moonwater with any medicine cat chores they can't bother with right now? Like herb collecting if they haven't started to wither yet. Though in this cold rain I wouldn't be surprised it finishes the last of the plants that are too stubborn.*

"Huh?" Whiteleaf pokes her head out of the den as she flicked her ears. "There is a cat here"

"What?" Mothdust got up and peeked outside. "Wait, I know him. That is-Umm- Rowanpaw, of Windclan"

"What is an apprentice doing here?" Whiteleaf asked as she walked out. At the moment I got up quickly and followed Whiteleaf out. The freezing rain was coming down a little harder since only a short time ago. I took a few steps towards the apprentice with caution. Rowanpaw was panting hard and looked ready to collapse. His reddish brown tabby fur was soaked and it made him look much thinner.

"Win-Windclan-help..." Whiteleaf, out of motherly instinct, walked up and snuggled the apprentice.

"He needs to be warmed up, he is freezing" Whiteleaf said calmly. I quickly nodded in agreement so we started to take him to the medicine cat den when Applestar came down.

"What is going on?" Applestar has appeared beside me. My leader had worried look as he stared at the freezing Windclan apprentice.

"Please, we need your he-help" Rowanpaw said as he slowly regained his breath. "Huge landslide hit our camp, a lot of cats are trapped or missing"

"I'll take a few warriors to go help" Applestar declared with out consulting me. My anger bubbles for a few moments.

What is the point of being deputy of you won't take my advice? I shook the anger out of my head. *But he is right, Windclan needs our help.* I followed my leader to a group of gathered warriors. A few of my clanmates sat outside of the warriors den intrigued by the commotion. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Whiteleaf guide Rowanpaw to the medicine cat den to warm up.

"Windclan needs help rescuing there warriors, it seems many are trapped by a huge landslide" Applestar informed. "I'll take Darkcloud, Nightrain, and Tanglestripe"

"I'll come with" I spoke up.

"Are you sure?" Applestar said inquiring.

"Yeah I am already cold and soaked, let's just go" I joked. Applestar nodded and turned towards Coldheart as he approached.

"Windclan needs help, they will most likely have injured cats so-"

"I'll gather herbs and such, go on ahead with out us" Coldheart grumbled as he turned back swiftly towards the medicine cat den. Applestar then led us out of camp quietly but we didn't get far before I heard a cat call out behind us.

"Wait?!" Puddlesplash came running up, "can I come too?"

"Of course!" Applestar smiled.

I know he wants to make sure Mudstripe is safe. I couldn't help but admire Puddlesplash caring nature, even if I don't want him out in this weather. Puddlesplash smiled back and we continued on our merry way to Windclan. As we did the freezing rain started to come down harder, the sound of cold rain hitting the ground and tree thundered in my ears.

"Should we head back?" Tanglestripe asked when we arrived at the border, "In this rain we really could end up sick"

"We can't just leave Windclan helpless right now, they need a bit of support" Applestar called back before jumping over the creek to Windclans territory. I shrugged at Tanglestripe and followed Applestar over. The rest of the group follow suit. The pounding of rain got less as we moved further into Windclan territory towards there camp.

"The ground is soaked here" Nightrain muttered. Tanglestripe slipped slightly in the loose mud.

"No wonder there was another landslide, this ground is extremely unstable"

"Well the fire damaged a lot of the grass here so there isn't a root system to keep everything together" Puddlesplash gave his insight.

"And the rain isn't helping this matter" I muttered. The mud below my paws squished and I fought the urge to cringe. Mud stuck between my toes is the worst feeling.

"Hey look!" Applestar called from the front. We followed his gaze to

a group of thin cats gathered by an obvious large mound of moved dirt.

"I am guessing it's Windclan" Tanglestripe gloomily pointed out.

"And what is left of there camp" Nightrain added, a tinge of fear in her voice.

"Come on" Applestar led the group towards the cats. As we got closer the Windclan cats finally noticed our approach. I could feel there wary gaze through the cold rain. Snailstar quickly approached us as we came to a stop before his clan mates. The look of relief washed over his face.

"Oh thank Starclan, you came. I was worried you wouldn't come help us since Briarstar refused to". Applestar was a little shocked about the news of the Riverclan leader, but he quickly got over it.

"We are here to help with rescue" Applestar smiled, "do you still have cats missing?"

"A few, yes, but many of my cats are injured and the few that aren't are trying to cover as much ground looking for them" Snailstar sounded exhausted.

"Coldheart and Moonwater will be coming soon with herbs and supplies. I'll have Puddlesplash guide any of your queens, kits, and elders back to our camp for safety if you want?"

"If that is okay" Snailstar sounded pleased.

"I did offer" Applestar followed the Windclan leader towards the Windclan cats.

"Thrushfeather, can you help Puddlesplash take our kits, queens, and elder to Thunderclan camp. It would be safer and healthier for them to be somewhere warm"

"Of course Snailstar" Thrushfeather bowed slightly before trotting over to the only elder, Speckflight, and helping her up.

"No! I am not leaving until I know that Horsepelt is safe!" a cream

tabby she-cat announced with an angry cry. Snailstar sighed as Puddlesplash went over to a very young and sad she-cat with her kits. I hadn't noticed till now but all these cats were dirty. Like, thick with mud dirty. The rain had washed most of it off their pelts but cats were still dirty.

"Birchleaf is right now with two other cats looking for more clan mates, she should just be over the mound of mud"

"Alrighty" Applestar bowed and pointed at us with his tail to go help Birchleaf. I led my two clanmates over towards the mud mound that covered Windclan camp. I side eyed the Windclan cats and and observed each one. Many cats were injured severely, including their medicine cat Daisyeyes. The white and brown tabby she-cat laid on the ground unconscious and had several wounds. Fennelpaw was rushing from cat to cat trying to keep up, but the poor she-cat was obviously panicking as she tried to care for her clanmates without her mentor. I spotted one still body a little ways past the small clan. A dark grey dapple pelt soaked and unmoving. I couldn't tell from here if the body was soaked with rain, mud, blood, or just mixture of all of it.

"I didn't think a landslide could do this much damage" Nightrain whispered as we climbed up the mound.

"I don't have high hopes for their still missing clanmates" I whispered back. On the mound I quickly could spot the two of the three Windclan that were supposedly searching for cats. The three were standing by a log lodged into the mud. The log kinda reminded me of a thorn stuck in the brown pad of a cat. We walked closer and soon could pick up the cats bickering through the rain.

"What if we tried moving the log to unstick Swiftwater?" a reddish brown tabby pointed out. Her voice shivered from the cold.

"Three of us can't move something that large of a log Archshore" I recognized Birchleaf's voice.

"Well we can't keep standing around here, let's just continue trying to dig him out" I hadn't seen Mudstripe standing there. His dark brown fur blended him in so well to the surrounding area. I could

recognize the panic in his voice.

I could understand why, it's his brother who is trapped under the log.

"But it will take forever Mudstripe, and we have other cats to look for" Archshore said in an also worried tone.

"Well, it will be faster with six cats" I announced as I got close enough. The three turned their heads and the relief spilled over them.

"Oh Starclan, thanks for coming" Birchleaf greeted.

"It wouldn't have been right not to help" Tanglestripe said calmly. Now that I was closer I could spot a very muddy lump pinned at the edge of the log. I would have thought it was more mud if it wasn't breathing.

"Alrighty, it will be easier with you guys here" Mudstripe sighed in relief. "We better start digging before we all get sick".

Chapter 33: Sagelight

"There you go Leafbloom" I said as I gave her some more moss. Leafbloom looked sadly up at me as her only two surviving kits mewed hungrily. Sadly their littermate did not make it to camp.

"Thank you Sagelight" she sounded tired. I purred softly.

"I'll let you and your kits rest, and I'll keep mine from bothering you" I laughed a little. She didn't laugh but grew mire sadden.

"I hope Swiftwater is still alive... I don't think I can raise my kits by myself" she muttered. A familiar pain in my chest stabbed me but I shiver it deep down for now.

"I bet he is, I doubt Starclan would take him away from you now" I lied through my teeth. It wasn't how I truly felt. Starclan has no control over a cats path. I left the young Windclan Queen with her kits and snuggled with my curious ones.

"Wow, they are so small and squeaky. Like mice!" Screechkit mewed as she watched Leafblooms kits with wide eyes.

"You have never seen a live mouse Screechkit" Ashenkit grumbled.

"Yeah I have! The Puddlesplash caught one and it was small!"

"But it was dead" Ashenkit grumbled more. Screechkit stepped onto her sisters head to meet me at eye level.

"Mom, do mice squeak?"

"Of course they do"

"See! Mom says they do Ashenkit!" Screechkit yowled in triumph as she squashed her sister below her.

"Alright, alright, just get off!" Ashenkit squirmed. Eaglekit popped up and quickly tackled his litternate off of Ashenkit.

"I'll save you!" He bravely announced as he pinned Screechkit.

"I don't need saving" Ashenkit shook her silver dapple pelt.

"Those four are a handful" Leafbloom said quietly. I laughed nervously.

"Oh, yes they are"

"Mom, when I get older I want kits" Plumkit said. She had been watching the young kits from over my back. Her large blue eyes kind and soft.

"I don't" Ashenkit shook her head and stuck her tongue out in disgust. "I hate the idea of being cooped up"

"What if your mate was a den dad, like Neville is?" Eaglekit asked before getting shoved off of Screechkit.

"Who says I want a mate?" Ashenkit sounded in protest.

"Kits, calm down" I advised.

"I hope I don't have that large of a litter" Orchidfrost giggled. I gave he tired knowing smile.

"Helof " Moonwaters head popped into the nursery. Her mouth was full of herbs for Leafbloom. Moonwater was slightly soaked from the chilly rain outside, that had suddenly picked up again.

"Hello Moonwater" I greeted.

"Moonwater!" Plumkit squealed happily.

"Just here to check up on Leafbloom" the medicine cat said as she dropped the herbs next to Leafbloom. "I got you borage leaves, bramble twigs, and ivy" the dark grey tabby smiled. "Rowanpaw is coming in soon with a mouse"

"Thank you Moonwater" Leafbloom smiled gratefully before chewing the bitter herbs.

"Is it alright if I check your kits?"

"Yes, just please be careful"

"Of course" Moonwater gave the nervous Queen a gentle purr before sniffing and checking her two kits. I was watching when I heard paw steps by the nursery. I flicked my ears and turned my head to see the Windclan apprentice who had come to get help. Rowanpaw was wet from the heavily pounding rain outside, but it didn't bother him as he dropped off a mouse for the Windclan Queen.

"Sorry it is wet Leafbloom"

"It is okay" she said before chowing down.

"Your kits seem fine, they just need a bit more warmth and milk" Moonwater smiled. The she-cat turned her attention to Orchidfrost. "You feeling okay too?"

"Yes, I don't feel any different" Orchidfrost replied.

"If this rain keeps up there could be another landslide" Rowanpaw muttered as he stared out of the entrance and at the muddy mess outside.

"Thunderclan camp is quiet safe" Moonwater soothed.

"Windclan isn't" Leafbloom pulled her kits closer to her belly.

"You don't have to worry about your clan mates, Puddlesplash and Thrushfeather are helping all the injured cats back here till this weather is over. It is taking a bit but they wanna make sure all of your cats stay safe"

"I think we are all gonna be grateful for Thunderclans hospitality" Rowanpaw bowed.

"Is becoming a great medicine cat hard Moonwater?" Plumkit asked. My little she-kit walked up to Moonwater with a happy smile.

"I wanna say it is hard, but to me it felt and seemed as difficult as becoming a warrior. You have to remember all sorts of herbs and

treatments like a warrior remembers hunting and battle moves. You have chores like one and most days you are always on your paws"

"I'm gonna check on Speckflight" Rowanpaw got up and left the nursery.

"I should too" Moonwater grinned at all of us before following the apprentice out into the rain.

"Plumkit?" Screechkit asked. I quickly began watching my kits again.

"Yeah?" Plumkit nestled into my side.

"Why were you asking Moonwater that question?" I watched Plumkit face as it quickly fell from being contempt to nervous.

"I-I just think medicine cats are cool, that's all"

"Tha-" Screechkit didn't finish as the ground below our paws shook a little. My kits squealed and huddled into me out of fear. I fluffed out and Orchidfrost jumped up hissing. Leafbloom fluffed up as well and protectively stood over her kits.

"Mom! What was that?" Eaglekit squealed as he buried his face into my fur. Outside I could hear cats panic and race around.

Oh please tell me there wasn't a landslide here!? We all got startled as Rowanpaw's face popped in a panic.

"Leafbloom are you okay!?"

"Yes Rowanpaw! But what was that shake?"

"I don't know, but Puddlesplash and Thrushfeather just got up and just left to check Windclan territory"

"So camp is safe?" Orchidfrost asked.

"Yeah" Rowanpaw moved out of the way as Branchtail came in to check on Orchidfrost.

"Are yo-"

"I am fine sweety" Orchidfrost purred as he snuggled her.

"Who did the two bring back? Thrushfeather and the Thunderclan cat" Leafbloom asked.

"A few injured cats, and two of the ones who were missing" Rowanpaw informed.

"Swiftwater! You have a head injury! Lay down!" Moonwaters worried order echoed into the nursery. Rowanpaw was shoved aside as a very dirty tom rushed in.

"Leafbloom! Are you alright? Are our kits okay?" I quickly guessed he was Swiftwater, her mate. I remember the cat being silver, but his fur was so disgusting he looked like a living dirt pile. I could see a mixture of mud and blood surrounding an area of his head. Moonwater rushes in glaring at the tom.

"Starclan's might! Swiftwater if you die I swear..." It was odd and funny seeing Moonwater irritated.

"Sorry..." he smiled nervously at Moonwater before sniffing his kits. "Wait, where is-"

"He didn't make it" Leafbloom said sadly. Both their heads dropped as they mourned silently for the loss of their kit.

"Moonwater, what was that shaking?" Branchtail asked as he wrapped his tail around Orchidfrost. Moonwater looked at the brown tabby and shook her head.

"I have no clue, but it obviously wasn't good"

"I hope it doesn't come again!" Ashenkit announced.

Chapter 34: Puddlesplash

I ran a long distance behind Thrushfeather as we ran back to Windclan. That shake stirred everyone into a panic back in camp, but us two were more concerned over where it came from. The rain pounded against my fur as I ran as hard as I could back to Windclan. It wasn't long before I reached the border. Thrushfeather was unsurprisingly still ahead of me so I continued to race towards the mud wave over Windclan camp. Thrushfeather arrived at the hill overlooking Windclan camp before me. I stopped, huffing, before looking down at Windclan camp. A chunk from another hill surrounding Windclan camp had crashed into the other chunk of land.

"Another landslide here" Thrushfeather muttered. I only nodded in agreement as I still hadn't had my breath back. The cats that were resting near the land slide had now moved farther back from it. We trotted carefully down to them. Thrushfeather calling out to his clanmates. "Is everyone alright!"

"Yeah, no cat got hurt from the second muddy wave" Snailstar answered. "Though, Mapleclaw and Applestar are missing"

What? Missing? I stopped and looked at my two clanmates as they cleaned themselves. The two were now completely covered in mud and monochrome brown that had not been washed from the pouring rain. Tanglestripe saw the panic in my eyes.

"We are fine Puddlesplash" Tanglestripe reassured.

"What about Mapleclaw and Applestar?" His face fell further and looked at Nightrain, who gave the same look.

"We split up, two teams of two" Nightrain started, "We don't have any clue where they are".

"We know they went down to the edge of landslide looking for Wildcloud. They could have been caught in the second wave"

Tanglestripe sadly theorized. I let my head fall a little.

"Puddlesplash!" I heard my name called and I looked up. Birchleaf was walking over with Mudstripe, a friend, following close behind.

"Yes Birchleaf?" I asked. She was known to be kind but authoritative throughout the clans. I kinda wanted to impress her she was that well respected by many cats.

"Was wondering if you would be willing to come with me and Mudstripe to keep looking for our clanmates along with yours" she nodded at Tanglestripe and Nightrain, "They need rest and warmth".

"Of-of course" I stuttered and smiled.

"I know you have made several long treks but-" I interrupted her.

"It is alright, I am not exhausted yet so I can still help" in truth I was. My paws aches and I felt frozen two the bones from the rain.

"Let us get going"

"You sure? You don't look too good" Mudstripe asked. I studied his face with tired eyes. His thin fur was also soaked and he dragged his paws a little. Mudstripe also wore the expression of tiredness like I did.

"I could say the same thing about you" I whispered. He laughed a little and the two of us followed closely behind Birchleaf. We walked around on top of the mound of recently and old moved earth. We scanned the surroundings for any movement, fur, or cat. It was harder than before, now having to search two land slides. A few hours go by but nothing was found, not even a body. Birchleaf sighed and looked back at us with a a tired expression.

"I'm sorry, but I think we are gonna have to cut our losses and head back"

"I wanna still keep looking!" I pleaded. "My deputy and leader are both missing"

"Puddlesplash you are tired, look you are starting to shake from the

cold and rain" Mudstripe intervened. I looked at him and back At Birchleaf. The rain splashed against our pelts at a slower, calmer way as it began to stop finally.

No! I can't leave them out here! Mapleclaw and Applestar need me! "But-"

"They are right Puddlesplash, can't have you catching a cold" I whipped my head to the right of us quickly to see my friend. Mapleclaw smiled tiredly as she limped closer to us. Her striking red fur was thickly covered in mud, making the only recognizable feature of hers was her lean body and hazel eyes. A mixture of blood and mud mixed in on her front left leg.

"Mapleclaw!" I called out happily. I rushed to her side to support her, completely forgetting how sore and tired I felt. She quickly leaned into me with a sigh of relief.

"I didn't expect any cat to go looking for me" she said with a little laughter before coughing a bit.

"We need to get her to Coldheart as soon as possible" Mudstripe advised as he came to her other side for support. Birchleaf nodded and guided us slowly to the rest of Windclan.

"What happened? Do you know where Applestar is?" I asked. She was definitely injured as I watched her. She had a gushing wound on her leg and she barely was putting any pressure on it.

"We went to the other side to search for Wildcloud" she said between deep breaths. "That was when the second wave started. I was able to at least make it to the edge before getting hit but I lost sight of Applestar..." she trailed off.

"He must still be back there then" I whispered. As we slowly made our way down from the pile, Coldheart came rushing to our aid.

"Great, you are all alright" Coldheart said sternly. He sniffed Mapleclaw gash before taking her from us. He glared at me with annoyance. "I want you back at camp in your nest now" he ordered, "you look ready to fall over".

"But we still have cats to-"

"No arguing Puddlesplash, I asked for new warriors to replace you, Nightrain, and Tanglestripe" I was a little surprised by his authority. But then again, he was the senior medicine cat.

"Okay Coldheart" I nodded before begrudgingly dragged my paws back to Thunderclan camp. As I left I noticed how few of the Windclan cats were around. *They must have been sending them to Thunderclan while I was searching, hope Thrushfeather was able to keep up with all of them.*

"Wait for me Puddlesplash!" Mudstripe called putting as he ran up to me. I stopped and waited for him to catch up, which wasn't much of a distance to begin with. "Coldheart is making me go rest too" Mudstripe held back a laugh.

"You look as bad as I do" I smiled. The two of us joked and laughed all the way back to Thunderclan camp, trying to ignore the tragedy behind us.

Chapter 35: Mapleclaw

"Looks like you will need to stay of your leg for awhile" Coldheart said as he pressed on a mixture of herbs and cobwebs onto my leg. I hissed from the stinging pain as he. "You are lucky you didn't break it at least"

"Yeah... lucky" I mumbled. I felt horrible, my gut churned at what had happened before the landslide. By now the rain had completely stopped, and the sun began to set in the distance causing the completely clear sky to be one a dark orange.

"I'll have Smokefoot help you back when he comes to get the last of the injured cats" Coldheart looked at me closely. "Do you have any clue as to where Applestar could be?"

"To tell you the truth Coldheart I don't think he survived, I barely did, and I just got hit by a flying branch"

"Well, let us hope for the best" Coldheart said out of character. He got up and walked around checking the other two injured cats left here. Birchleaf stuck around to talk with Snailstar. Rustfur had several small scratches all over his pelt, though most of it was now covered in cobwebs. Fernmist sat close to him licking her fur in an attempt to clean it. I don't know what is wrong with her but she said she wasn't moving her back legs at all. Past them was one body. Mistmask was found pretty quickly through she wasn't alive when they did. I let my gaze drop to my leg and the memory rushed my head.

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We walked along the far, far edge of the land slide. The rain began to pound against our pelts harder as we searched. Or at least Applestar was and I was just trying to keep my leader in sight.

"Mapleclaw I don't think Wildcloud is around here" my leader stopped and looked saddened.

"Same, I think he is buried somewhere in the landslide"

"Oh sure, buried somewhere..." a new voice made me jump around with a hiss. Behind me was a ghostly cat, and I mean ghostly. The cat was see through, with his eyes a pitch black except for the iris which was a bright green. He was all white except for the black ears, muzzle, paws, and tail. He was bleeding black blood profusely from a wound on the back of his head the stained his neck.

"Who are you?" Applestar growled lowly. The tom looked from my leader than to me with a smirk.

"I am here to help her out" Before Applestar or I could could question the mystery dead cat further the ground shook aggressively. I spotted the source pretty quickly since it was crashing towards us. Another landslide from another hill.

"Applestar!"

"Start running!" He ordered. We began rushing away from it. We wouldn't be able to climb the other one in time so the best option was to move out of the way. Out of the corner I saw the ghost cat tackle Applestar from behind and bite down on his neck hard. I quickly spun around ready to launch myself at him when I saw Applestar collapse from the wound, blood spraying the ground as hard as the rain pour around us. The ghost cat smirked again and ran ahead of me. I looked at Applestar and the fast approaching landslide. Cursing under my breath I continued to run and barely make it out of the way. A branch shot out and hit my leg, making me roll through the mud and knock the breath out of my lungs. I tried to stand but collapsed as I gasped from the lack of air and the pain that shot you my leg. The ghost cat appeared again and pressed his paw against my neck, his claws pulling at my fur.

"If I were you, I wouldn't go around saying a dark forest cat killed Applestar. I mean... you were the last to see him alive. And the others might start putting two and two together about the others" he narrowed his eyes at me and the cold knowing look in mystery cats green and black eyes froze me to my core more than the rain. I finally gained my courage back and shoved him off with yowl of anger, shakily standing on my three paws. I furiously looked around

for the black and white cat but he had already left, paw prints in the mud was the only thing left.

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"Mapleclaw?" My eyes flew open at the call of my name.

I must have dozed off. I looked up to see Smokefoot standing over me with worried orange eyes. While his fur was just damp his paws were soaked with mud.

"Do you need help getting up?" the older warrior asked.

"No, no it is just a cut" I quickly surmised. I got up with more difficulty than I expected. I looked behind me to see Coppernose and Snailstar carrying Fernmist on their backs. Birchleaf stood next to Rustfur. Coldheart was pacing between the two, checking Rustfurs many scratches and Fernmist paralysis. "Is anyone gonna stay behind and look for the missing cats?" I asked Smokefoot as he let me lean on him.

"When we get back will see if any cat wants to volunteer" he smiled weakly before helping me walk. As we started to climb the hill, going slower than normal pace since two of us couldn't walk right, Coldheart came up to me and Smokefoot.

"How is your leg?"

"Still can't put too much pressure on it" I answered.

"You should be fine after a few days of rest" Coldheart grumbled. His eyes were clouded with sadness. Something you usually didn't see in the old cat. "I believe that Applestar is with Starclan now..."

"You do?" Smokefoot sounded distressed. I felt guilt fill my chest again as I remembered that Smokefoot was Applestars older brother.

Did that-did that really just happen?! A dark forest cat just attacked me and killed Applestar! How in the clans did he even get to the living?

Chapter 36: Puddlesplash

"Puddlesplash" someone nudged my side. I groaned and curled up tighter. "Puddlesplash get up" the cat nudged harder.

"What?" I opened my eyes and glared at the cat. As my blurry eyes cleared away I saw Forestpaws bright green eyes staring at me.

"Mapleclaw is calling a clan meeting, she wants all cats there"

"All of them? She can miss one" I groaned and shut my eyes. I was still sore and cold from traveling so much in the rain. The minute I hit my nest I fell into a deep sleep, pleading Starclan won't send me another dream thing again. *I don't need to deal with any of that right now.*

"Puddlesplash come on" Forestpaw tugged on my neck. I hissed in pain and quickly got up.

"Alright, alright! I'm up!" I hissed. She smiled and pranced around me, keeping me from collapsing back into my nest. I dragged my paws out of the warriors den with my apprentice right behind me. I walked out to the freezing cold air of night. We worked all afternoon helping Windclan, who were now asleep in the elders den. Ravenclaw and Rainstripe moved into the nursery for the time being. I looked up at the sky to see the moon wasn't that high in the sky, though I don't know why she would still be calling a meeting now. I sat down next to an also tired Rushfire and leaned into him, trying to keep my eyes open.

"Hey, guess your still tired?" Rushfire asked as he licked my forehead.

"Yeah" I mumbled.

"I don't think this will take long"

"I hope not..." I closed my eyes lightly. Rushfire held me up as I

kinda snoozed. Above Mapleclaw began to speak.

"Coldheart and I believe that Applestar won't be coming back" she said aloud. I was barely paying attention as I felt myself fall asleep again. "So tonight I'll be going to the moonpool to receive my nine lives" I shit my eyes at the news. I couldn't tell if I was doing it from the hard hitting grief or the sleep deprivation.

"Puddlesplash?" Rushfire nudged me.

"Huh?" I opened my eyes as cats voiced there displeasure.

"Applestar couldn't have lost all his lives so soon! We should continue looking in the morning!" I heard Whiteleaf protest. I looked up to see Snailstar was sitting a little behind Mapleclaw. He looked saddened and I a thought arrived in my head.

Did they not find Wildcloud?

"She is right" some cat agreed with Whiteleaf, I think Smokefoot. "He could still come back"

"Hey now!" Coldheart called out from the crowd. "If Starclan doesn't give her any lives than we know that Applestar is still alive". At that the crowd calmed down. Mapleclaw sighed from the looks of it before continueing.

"If" she stopped for a second, "IF Applestar is dead I want to follow the Warrior code and select a new deputy for Thunderclan before moonhigh" she didn't receive any outbursts from that so she continued. "I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Thunderclan is Puddlesplash!"

"What?" I stood up straighter in confusion as Mapleclaw laid her eyes one me. Murmurs of approval echoed through the stone hollow of Mapleclaws choice. I began to panic and my anxiety, which hadn't resurfaced in awhile, made my panic worse. *Why would she pick me? I don't have any idea how to do deputy stuff!* I watched Mapleclaws face and saw the trust in her eyes, the confidence she had in me. I sighed and walked forward. *Do this for Mapleclaw! She*

is trusting you! She wants you, her good friend, to be her deputy! I sat down below High rock and bowed. "I gladly accept the position of deputy, if you do receive nine lives"

"Puddlesplash! Puddlesplash! Puddlesplash!" Thunderclan cheered. I could here the Windclan cats still awake also cheer a little. Though you could definitely hear Rushfire, Forestpaw, and Sparrowscar above everyone. I could feel my pelt burn with embarrassment.

Damm, it is just like my warriors ceremony! I walked back into the crowd and leaned back into Rushfire. I could hear my mate purring intensely as he snuggled me.

"Congrats" he whispered.

"Mmmm" was all I could say. I didn't much like this idea. Two reasons really. One, it made it feel like Applestar possible death more plausible in my mind. The second was I didn't have much interest in the position and felt put on the spot.

"I also need to make a new deputy, as Wildclouds body was found" Snailstar stepped forward. I watched the lame Windclan leader dip his head down as grief took hold of him. My own pity filled my head.

Snailstar lost his daughter and his Deputy all in one go... and Ferretflight lost his dad...

"I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our lost clan members today may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Windclan is Birchleaf!" unlike me, Birchleaf didn't hesitate coming forward as whispers of approval rose from the crowd. Birchleaf sat below high rock and bowed to Snailstar.

"I would be honored to be Windclans deputy Snailstar"

"Birchleaf! Birchleaf! Birchleaf!"

"That dismisses the meeting" Mapleclaw called out. Mapleclaw gave me the look of 'come see me' and I felt anxious again.

"You coming back to the den?" Rushfire asked.

"No, I need to go talk with Mapleclaw"

"Alrighty deputy" he said pleasantly as he nuzzled my cheek. I didn't reply back as he walked back to the warriors den. I sat there gaining the courage to talk with Mapleclaw.

Why am I so nervous?! It is my friend?! Stop acting like this?! I got up and walked into the leaders den, passing Snailstar on my way up. I stopped him as he was about to pass me.

"Snailstar I am sorry for your loss and I hope I can assist you and your clanmates in any way I can" I said with a little bow of my head. He laughed darkly at my response and I froze. I looked up to see his hazel eyes clouded with anger and sadness.

"Thank you, and thank you for everything you did today" he nodded before continuing his way down.

"Puddlesplash" Mapleclaws voice pulled my attention back up. Her head was poking out of the leaders den. "Hurry up mouse brain" she said teasingly before her head disappeared into the tendrils. I rolled my eyes jokingly and entered. I let my eyes adjust to the darkness as Mapleclaw spoke. "Don't worry about dawn patrol, I had set that up earlier today"

"Is that all you want to tell me?" I really thought there would be more.

"I need to make sure Windclan is set up and taken care of before snow comes, what do propose we should do?" she asked swiftly.

"We at least help them rebuild? Or let their injured, elders, queens, and kits stay while the rest rebuild? There are plenty of bracken around and they you could also use some of the debris brought about by the landslide" I suggested.

"Good idea, I'll talk with Snailstar about it tomorrow morning once everyone rests"

"I can talk to Birchleaf about Windclan hunting in their territory for their cats that stay back in our camp if that would help?"

"Another good idea, thanks Puddlesplash" she smiled at me. I still felt uneasy around my friend. Even with her friendly smile and calmer demeanor now the air felt sinister.

"Ready to go Mapleclaw?" Coldheart trotted in. He looked as tired as I originally had, but I don't think he was willing to admit that.

It has been a tiring day

"One moment, I wanted to talk to you two about something" she said sitting down. Coldheart groaned but said nothing. Mapleclaw looked between me and Coldheart for a few seconds of silence. "I want you two to report any of the weird dreams that Puddlesplash has to me immediately after it's done"

"How do you-"

"Applestar told me" she interrupted me. Coldheart seemed surprised still.

"I know that Applestar was thinking about telling you but I didn't think he actually would" Coldheart mumbled.

"Does Moonwater know?" Mapleclaw asked.

"Of course she doesn't, she is too young to know about it" Coldheart said sarcastically. Mapleclaw glared at the large black fluffy medicine cat.

"Good" Mapleclaw got up, "We should get going"

"My thoughts exactly" Coldheart eyed her suspiciously as she passed between us. Confused I gave him a weird look a d he just shrugged. Following my limping friend out of the headers den.

Chapter 37: Sagelight

I woke up early today. Getting out of my nest carefully to not disturb my four sleeping kits. I silently left the nursery and sat outside. The rain from yesterday had froze over from the temperatures dropping last night. The sting of the cold prickled my paws as I took in a deep calming breath of the cold air. As I let it out I could see my warm breath become a foggy cloud before disappearing into the cold morning. The sun was barely up, making the clear sky glow with oranges, reds, and yellows. The dim Dawn light hit the clearing. Making the frozen area glitter and sparkle in a beautiful dazzle of light. It was beautiful. On one side of the clearing I saw dawn patrol begin to gather. Slatefoot yawned as he let Nightrain lean against him. Fallenpaw hung her head as he played with an ice patch below her paws.

I guess they were waiting for some cat still just as I finished my thought Cardinalrush ran out of the warriors den in a panic and met with group. Slatefoot scolded her and then the group set out to do dawn patrol. I saw from the corner of my eye movement by the medicine cat den. I turned my head to see Moonwater looking worriedly at the entrance. I put two and two together. *Is Coldheart and Mapleclaw not back from the moonpool yet?* I trotted over to Moonwater to ask what was wrong, careful not to slip on the thin ice. "Moonwater are you okay?"

"I-I bet I am just worried for nothing" she looked down at her paws. "Coldheart and Mapleclaw haven't gotten back yet"

"I bet he is fine" I wrapped my tail around my friend. "How is Daisyeyes and Fennelpaw?" I asked. I was trying to distract her.

"Daisyeyes woke up last night" Moonwater said with relief, "Fennelpaw is so happy she is. Right now though the two are sleeping".

"That is great!" I said with a smile. Moonwater smiled back weakly but glanced back at the entrance.

"Maybe I'll ask Puddlesplash if he and I can go to the moonpool if Coldheart and Mapleclaw aren't back by sunhigh"

"I think they will be back before then" I tried again to reassure her. She didn't falter in her worry. An idea popped into my head when I glanced at the nursery. "Hey, would you be willing to entertain Plumkit? She doesn't like playing with her rough littermates but she enjoys spending time with you! If that is okay with you of course"

"Actually, Coldheart and I have been discussing this" she looked up at me with hope, "Plumkit shows obvious interest in us, would it be okay if we asked her if she wants to become a medicine cat?"

"You don't need my permission to ask her a question, if Plumkit wants to be a medicine cat then she can be that"

"It is just such an important decision," Moonwater trailed off, "and she might feel pressured or something"

"You are starting to sound like Puddlesplash when he was an apprentice" I laughed. She laughed a little.

"Maybe your right," she smiled up at me, "I'll ask her later"

"It would be nice if she said yes, since Coldheart is retiring soon" Moonwater laughed at my statement. "What? Is he not?"

"I asked him about that, and Coldheart said he would rather get smited by Starclan than retire to be an elder"

"Oh Starclan" I grumbled before laughing with her.

"Screechkit get off!" Eaglekit squelch angrily at his littermate. I sighed heavily at the sounds of my kits coming from the nursery. Giving Moonwater an apologetic look I as wandered back over to the nursery to deal with my kits. I could hear them bicker as I walked over.

"Never! Not till you surrender to me Shadowclan scum!"

"Why do I have to be Shadowclan? Why can't you be!?"

"Because Thunderclan is better than Shadowclan! And I am better than you!" I entered the nursery to see my kits play fighting. Screechkit was on top of Eaglekit

"No you're not!" the orange tabby pushed his sister off of him. Screechkit landed with a thud before jumping up onto her paws again.

"Is that all you got!?" She said as they continued to play. The two rough housing ran between my legs as Ashenkit and Plumkit walked up to me with tired eyes.

"Morning mom" Plumkit looked up at me and smiled. I smiled back at her and the three of us followed the other two out of the nursery. Hopefully Leafbloom, Swiftwater, and Orchidfrost didn't wake up because of my kits.
Ashenkit went off and started playing on some of the ice in the shade while Plumkit went to the medicine cat den to hang out with Moonwater. I felt myself being bothered as I watched the entrance, keeping an ear out for my kits. Something in the pit of my stomach wanted me to go look for Mapleclaw and Coldheart. Orchidfrost came outside with a yawn and smiled sweetly at me.

"Morning Sagelight" she greeted.

"Morning..."

"Something wrong?"

"I-I have a worried feeling, turns out Mapleclaw and Coldheart haven't been back yet"

"Oh... well if you want I can watch your kits if you just wanna go check the trail to the Moonpool? I been meaning to spend time with your kits"

"You sure it wouldn't be a bother?" I gave her a embarrassed look.

"Really it wouldn't be!" The calico gave me a happy purr.

"Thanks you!" I bowed in thank you before briskly walking off to the medicine cat den. I pushed through the tendrils and let my eyes

adjust.

"Mom! There are so many cool herbs!" Plumkit joyful mew made me smile.

"You enjoying yourself sweetie?"

"Yeah! I wanna be a medicine cat!" she said as she sniffed and organized herbs. Moonwater smiled before turning to me.

"What do you need?"

"Could we talk alone?"

"Oh, okay" Moonwater glanced at Plumkit. "Would you be willing to bring some of that borage leaves I showed you and bring it to Leafbloom please?"

"Ok Moonwater!" Plumkit gleefully grabbed some glossy, riged leaves and raced out of the den. Moonwater turned to me confused.

"What's wrong?"

"I have a really bad gut feeling so I am gonna go look for Mapleclaw and Coldheart" I felt bad worrying her again but it needed to be done.

"Alright, I'll grab Puddlesplash as well" she briskly left the medicine cat den with me following behind her. After I left I headed back and sat next to the entrance of the nursery. I watched Moonwater pull Puddlesplash away from him talking with Birchleaf and urgently tell him her worries. His face went from perplexed to anxious as well and nodded to her in agreement. I don't know what they were saying but I can guess the two were talking about Coldheart absence. Puddlesplash walked to Birchleaf and apologized I guess before following Moonwater over to me.

"You sure you wanna go?" Puddlesplash asked me. I nodded.

"I am just worried" Puddlesplash gave me a sympathetic look and so the three of us left camp. Once past the camp wall, we saw the forest glinting with the frozen rain. It covered everything and

clomped onto twigs and branches like midway tear drops. The ground frost crunched beneath each of our paw steps.

"What do you think kept them?" Moonwater asked Puddlesplash but the silver and brown tom shrugged.

"I hope nothing bad, maybe it was Mapleclaws leg? She was still injured when they left"

"What if something is blocking the path?" I added.

"Sagelight makes a point, there was a lot of landslides so something else might have gotten un-lodged or fallen" Moonwater continued with my statement. We continued on our way, calling out for the missing pair of cats. As we approached the more rocky parts of the path to the Moonpool the worry in Moonwaters voice grew.

"Please Coldheart! Where are you?"

"Mapleclaw! Coldheart!" Puddlesplash called out. He flicked his tail in nervousness and looked back at me. "Maybe we should-"

"Guys! Please help me!" Mapleclaws cries came from off the path, near an outcrop of tall rocks. We ran over in concern, Puddlesplash calling out to his friend.

"Mapleclaw! Are you alright?!" We hopped onto the rocks and looked down. It was steeper on the other side, with the rocks thickly covered in ice. Moonwater almost slipped and fell off. Below us was Mapleclaw shivering from the cold, she had a new cut on her neck and she was holding her bad leg against her chest. Closer to us was Coldheart laying still. His head laying in a thick, dark pool of blood. The black fluffy toms chest was moving.

"Oh Starclan!" Moonwater cried. She jumped down ungracefully before running to Coldhearts body. Puddlesplash and I following quickly down, with the deputy running to check Coldheart. Moonwater looked up at us and shook her head. Tears already began streaming down her dark tabby face. Puddlesplash pulled her closely as she cried into his chest loudly. I walked over and pulled Mapleclaw close as she was shivering hard.

"What happened?" Puddlesplash asked quietly towards the cat I was trying to warm up. Mapleclaw looked at the body with such tired, grieving, terrified eyes.

"We-we didn't even make it to the Moonpool. He-he thought there was another cat as w-we heard something shift from beyond the rocks, when we jumped on the rocks we slipped and fe-fell" she closed her eyes and looked down. "He-he hit his head on our way down...I-I am so sorry I couldn't climb over with my le-leg... much less carry him out. I am s-s-sorry..."

"No you are alright" I said softly, giving her a comforting lick on the head. I wrapped my tail around her to try and warm her up more. Puddlesplash gave Mapleclaw a tearful thankful look before continuing to comfort Moonwater.

Chapter 38: Maplestar

PREVIOUS NIGHT

I followed Coldheart towards the moonpool. The path to it was a little steep and rocky with a few large rocks one had to climb over, but nothing hard to handle. What bothered me was the cold. My pads stung as I walked across the freezing path. It was hard to keep my grip on the ground as the wet ground froze and my cut leg making it harder. We both hadn't said anything since we left Puddlesplash in the leaders den. I eyed the large black cat suspiciously. Coldheart hadn't much as even looked at me as we made this small journey, which worried me.

He would have complained or had said something snarky by now. What is he thinking?

"When we reach the moonpool, we aren't to speak to eachother. Nor do we speak of what happens tonight to each other or to any cat" Coldheart stated numbly. He didn't even look at me as he spoke.

"Understood Coldheart"

"Good" the large tom muttered. The rest of the walk was silent. I got bored just looking at Coldhearts furry tail and looked up at the sky. The white frosted moon glimmered above as its light filled the sky. The moon was no where near full, only a sliver left out of the dark. I leaped up onto a few more rocks before landing softly in a stoney clearing. The moonpool was gorgeous as my eyes laid upon it. The surface was clear as it captured the dark night sky above to perfection. The small waterfall trickling into it sent tiny ripples across the surface, however it barely altered the reflection. I cocked my head to the side and looked from the sky to the pool in speculation.

There are no stars reflected in the moonpool. I shrugged the oddity away, *maybe the stars are too dim to be reflected in the pool.* I laid down next to the pool in a comfortable position and curled my tail

around my paws as I tried to reflex to the cold, wet stone bellow my belly. I gently pressed my nose to the pool surface and closed my eyes. I fought myself to not crinkle my nose to the feeling of the freezing water. After a few moments of just laying there with my eyes closed and my nose to the water I sighed. *Nothing happened...* I opened my eyes to a surprise. I wasn't next to the pool. I was in the middle of a black, empty landscape with nothing around in sight. I got up in frustration and looked around closely. "Hello?!" I called out to the darkness. Only my echo could be heard. *This can't be Starclan! What is going on?* I was suddenly aware of the warm, sticky feeling engulfing my front paws and looked down. I yelped and jumped backwards at the sight. My paws were thickly drowned in blood, as of I murdered someone. Fear swept my mind into a mess as I tried to regain composure. Then a light thump sounded in the empty chasm around me. I looked around spastically and quickly saw just a large splash of blood cover the ground to my left. The blood pooled and grew larger from an unknown source, just continued to grow from an invisible wound. Then another thump behind me. I turned my head around to see a second pool of blood splatter the ground and grow slowly like the first. And then another thump followed swiftly after. *It-it sounds like bodies hitting the ground...* the image sent a shiver down my spine. Invisible bodies bleeding out around me. A fourth thump rang in my ears and I closed my eyes. *Why is this happening?! Is this a prophecy?! Why can't this end?! Wake up Mapleclaw!* I never felt fear like this before as I felt the four pools of blood begin to drift and lap at my paws.

"We know what you did, we know what you did, we know what you did, we know..." a chorus of several cats began to chant the same line over and over again. I realized what they meant immediately and felt myself lash out to the vacant air.

"I did what I had too! They had to die! I am sor-" I stopped screaming just as the group of invisible cats simultaneously stopped chanting as well. *The-th-there was only four thumps... Applestar?* I felt myself get dragged backwards by claws and I screamed out loud. I lashed at the empty space behind me with a fury of claws. I felt the cold stone beneath my paws and the even colder sting of the water on my nose. My eyes flew open and I leaped away from the pool with a hiss.

"I knew it!" Coldheart growled furiously as he leaped at me. I was able to leap out of the way before the large tom was able to land on me.

"What the-" I snarled. I placed myself quickly into a defensive position as Coldhearts blue eyes bore into me with fury I had never seen in a cats eye before.

"You killed Applestar, or at least attempted to!"

"I did no such thing you crazy old bat!" I said truthfully. *It was that dark forest cat! Who ever he was!*

"Don't lie to me you snake" he growled lowly before launching himself at me. I clawed his chest which made him take a few steps back. I didn't break any skin, just had clumps of his fur in between my claws. At this, I leaped backwards again. Coldheart is much larger than me in both height and weight. If I get pinned by him I should just except death right then and there.

I need to run...run from everything.

"I bet you killed Pineclaw and Petalclaw as well all those moons ago!" Coldheart crouched down. His blue eyes slits as he clawed at my soul with them. "And let me guess, you killed Foxhop too? Because he became deputy"

"Look I am sorry!" I hissed back, realizing too late I just admitted to killing the orange tabby.

"Well, you sure don't deserve mercy now" Coldheart lunged at me and I dived away from him. I barely escaped by a tail length as I tried to scurry out of the clearing. I could hear Coldheart behind me closely. My mind was frantic as I tried to figure out a plan.

I can't fight him! Even if he is a medicine cat I am out matched! I just gotta run, run as- I skipped out of my thoughts as a large weights crashed down onto me, knocking me into a small hallow of the path. I hit the ground hard on my back. The air escaping my lungs from the impact. I gasped and panicked as I regained air but I didn't get up in time before Coldheart was on top of me, one claw poised

for my neck. I felt blood soak my neck from where he must of snack me with a claws-out paw.

"Look what you did to Puddlesplash! You killed his brother!" Coldheart spat. The large, black tom was ready to bring down his large claw and tear into me. I couldn't look the medicine cat in the eye and went eye level with his belly. The ice bellow me prickled my skin and mixed with the blood from my fresh wound. An idea came to mine as I spotted Coldhearts back legs. "Don't you have any remorse for anything you did, any?"

"Just get off!" I kicked his back legs hard with mine and pushed with all my might with my front legs. To my surprise Coldheart lost his balance and fell forwards, missing crashing on top of me and landing to the side of me unsteadily. His head colliding with a rock. I scrambled to my paws and prepared myself to fight him. My eyes went wide with shock though, as his body twitched softly against the ground. The rock he hit his head on was jagged and glistened in the moonlight with dark blood. The blood trickling onto the ice from an injury just below his ear. I sat down and calmed my body as it fidgeted restlessly from the adrenaline rush and cold air. My mind began to race though with questions and fear however. *How am I gonna explain this to my clanmates? Please oh Starclan I am sorry!* I glanced up at the direction of the moonpool and instinctively pulled my ears back. *Starclan didn't gift me any lives.* I pawed the ground from frustration realizing they really do know of what I have done. Then relief flooded me. *Applestar is alive... thank the star above! He survived! He survived that entire ordeal! If he comes back to camp then he will tell everyone about that dark forest cat. But... wouldn't he had been back by now? Or is he stuck, losing the last of his lives? Or did something else happen?*

Alligances Update 2

ThunderClan

Leader
Maplestar - a bright red tabby she-cat with a white belly, chest, ear, and hazel eyes

Deputy
Puddlesplash - a strong brown and grey tabby tom with one blue eye one green eye
Apprentice, Forestpaw

Medicine Cat
Moonwater - a dark grey tabby she-cat with dark blue eyes

Warriors
Whiteleaf - a white she-cat with dark green eyes and a large, fluffy tail
Sparrowscar - a dark red solid tom with blue eyes. Heavily scared on one side of his body
Tanglestripe - a brown tabby tom with dark orange eyes and a torn right ear
Apprentice, Jaggedpaw
Smokefoot - a dark grey tabby tom with darker grey paws and dark orange eyes
Apprentice, Flypaw
Iceeye - a dark grey and white tabby tom with ice blue eyes
Silverfeather - a white, silver, and dark grey tabby she-cat with purplish blue eyes
Apprentice, Sycamorepaw
Darkcloud - a lean black and white tom with dark yellow eyes
Branchtail - a dark brown tabby tom with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Firepaw
Rushfire - a ginger and red tabby tom with bright green eyes
Nightrain - a dark grey dapple she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Blizzardpaw
Slatefoot - a blue tom with light grey paws and ice blue eyes

Apprentice, Fallenpaw
Coppernose - a black tom with a white muzzle and bright orange eyes
Apprentice, Flutterpaw
Springtail - a light grey speckled she-cat with dark green eyes
Cardinalrush - a orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with dark brown eyes
Mothdust - a grey fluffy chested tabby she-cat with brown belly, legs, and green eyes

Apprentices
Flypaw - a light brown tabby tom with a white belly, one white paw, dark brown paws, and bright orange eyes
Forestpaw - a white and silver tabby she-cat with bright green eyes
Firepaw - a white and ginger tabby tom with dark grey tail and purple eyes
Fallenpaw - an all white, small she-cat with purplish blue eyes
Blizzardpaw - a white and blue splotched tabby tom with green eyes
Jaggedpaw - a spiky black tom with a large tail and yellow eyes
Flutterpaw - a grey and pale ginger tabby she-cat with blue eyes and round ears
Sycamorepaw - a grey tabby tom with a white belly, big paws, and bright green eyes

Queens
Dawndrop - a ginger and cream tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes
Neville - a grey and white tom with purple eyes
Sagelight - a muscular dark brown tabby she-cat with a fluffy mane, tail, light brown belly, and bright orangish yellow eyes (Eaglekit, Plumkit, Ashenkit, and Screechkit)
Orchidfrost - an almost all white she-cat except for the calico tail, face, and dark brown eyes

Elders
Rainstripe - a stocky blue tabby tom with blue eyes and white paws
Ravenclaw - a large fluffy black tom with hazel eyes and long whiskers

Kits
Eaglekit - a ginger tabby tom with two white paws, two dark colored paws, and bright yellow eyes.

Plumkit- a dark brown she-cat with four white paws and blue eyes.
Ashenkit - a silver speckled she-cat with fluffy ears and hazel eyes
Screechkit - a fluffy light brown tabby she-cat with bright orange eyes

ShadowClan

Leader
Tinystar - a tiny grey tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

Deputy
Sandheart - a pale yellow dapple tom with golden paws and dark orange eyes
Apprentice, Snowpaw

Medicine Cat
Sootfall - a stocky, dark grey tabby tom with bright amber eyes
Apprentice, Mistpaw

Warriors
Ryestep - a dark brown stocky tom with darker brown paws and dark orange eyes
Leaffur - a grey tom with bright yellow eyes
Sorrelscar - a dark golden fluffy, tabby tom with pale hazel eyes and a scratched up muzzle
Oakface - a white, heavily built tom with broken face markings and dark yellow eyes
Yarrowpad - a dark yellow tabby tom with a fluffy tail and light brown eyes
Batwing - a large, fluffy black tom with purplish blue eyes
Lynxfur - a golden leopard tom with bright blue eyes
Swanfeather - a thin, white fluffy she-cat with dark green eyes
Cloverstem - a slightly fluffy, solid grey tom with dark green eyes
Peareyes - a white and brown she-cat with hazel eyes
Troutscale - a small dark grey dapple she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Shrewnose - a light brown tabby she-cat with darker brown paws and dark green eyes
Sprucepounce - a velvety brown tabby tom with bright blue eyes
Blossomtail - a golden tortoiseshell she-cat with white speckled tail and dull amber eyes

Badgerfur - a black and white tom with bright brown eyes
Cedarlight - a brown tortoiseshell tom with dark green eyed
Morningwhisker - a light grey and bright golden tabby she-cat with green eyes
Sunsong - a dark golden tabby tom with light blue eyes
Shinystone - a blueish silver and white tabby she-cat with black paws and dark green eyes
Talonfall - a light brown tabby she-cat with bright amber eyes

Apprentices
Mistpaw - a silver fluffy tom with yellow eyes
Snowpaw - an all white fluffy tom with blue eyes (he is deaf)

Queens
Doveshade - a fluffy brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes
Twigtail - a thin, brown and white fluffy she-cat with dark hazel eyes (Pouncekit and Violetkit)

Elders
Flamefall - a lean orange tabby tom with bright yellow eyes. (Former Leader)
Tallstem - a long legged golden tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes

Kits
Pouncekit - a white and red tortoiseshell she-cat with dark grey eyes
Violetkit - a black she-cat with white paws and dark green eyes.

WindClan

Leader
Snailstar - a thin, dark brown dapple tom with dark hazel eyes and a lame back leg
Apprentice, Shadypaw

Deputy
Birchleaf - a muscular brownish ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with bright hazel eyes
Apprentice, Cavepaw

Medicine Cat
Daisyeyes - a small, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes
Apprentice, Fennelpaw

Warriors
Fernmist - a fluffy, dark grey tabby she-cat with pretty green eyes. Paralyzed in the back legs
Hayheart - a thin golden she-cat with bright orange eyes
Thrushfeather - a dull brown tabby tom with pale blue eyes
Apprentice, Cricketpaw
Roseflare - a fluffy, ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with orange eyes
Apprentice, Rowanpaw
Mudstripe - a dark brown tabby tom with aquamarine eyes
Swiftwater - a grey tom with dark green eyes, white chest, and two light grey paws
Apprentice, Rainypaw
Ferretflight - a brown tabby tom with white paws and dark green eyes
Rustfur - a dull ginger tabby tom with grayish blue eyes
Apprentice, Sunnypaw
Horsepelt - a light brown tom with one white paw and bright orange eyes
Apprentice, Cloudypaw
Heronwing - a light brown tabby tom with grey eyes
Archshore - a dark ginger and white tabby she-cat with amber eyes

Apprentices
Rowanpaw - a dull red and ginger tom with grey eyes
Shadypaw - a orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes
Fennelpaw- a light brown tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Cricketpaw - a black and orange tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes
Cavepaw - a tiny grey and white tabby tom with amber eyes
Sunnypaw - a ginger and white tabby tom with green eyes
Cloudypaw - a ginger and blue calico tom with orange eyes
Rainypaw - a blue and white splotched she-cat with purple eyes

Queens
Aspenskip - a muscular and fluffy black she-cat with pretty brown

eyes
Flowerbreeze - a white thin she-cat with dark orange
Leafbloom - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with yellow eyes (Featherkit and Splashkit)
Milkweed - a golden tabby she-cat with a fluffy tail, one white paw, and orange eyes

Elders
Spekflight - a dark orange solid she-cat with dark orange eyes and white spek on her chest

Kits
Featherkit - a dark grey tabby tom with dark green eyes
Splashkit - a golden tabby tortoiseshell she-cat with dark brown eyes

Riverclan

Leader
Briarstar - a lean, black and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes

Deputy
Shortlake - a silver tom with dark blueish grey eyes and a stumpy tail

Medicine Cat
Ravennest - a black tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes

Warriors
Flailbelly - a large, fluffy sliver speckled tom with white belly, chest, and bright amber eyes.
Mossyflower - a fluffy blue she-cat with darker blue splotches and aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Lichenpaw
Scorchfire - a black, white, and ginger patched tom with bright orange eyes and a fluffy tail
Apprentice, Bluepaw
Clifffern - an orangish brown tabby tom with green eyes
Lightningcloud - a fluffy dark grey tom with a darker grey mane and bright yellow eyes

Tansypelt - a silver she-cat with a fluffy tail and hazel eyes
Apprentice, Ripplepaw
Gorsefern - a golden she-cat with white chest, belly, ears, muzzle, and hazel eyes
Redleap - a dark red stocky tom with orange eyes, white chest, belly, and tipped tail
Swampsong - a cream tom with brown points and amber eyes
Reedbee - a silverish blue tabby she-cat with minty green eyes
Boulderstep - a dark blue stocky tom with lighter blue splotches and blue eyes
Apprentice, Hawkpaw
Willowheart - a silver fluffy tom with white ears, paw, muzzle, and dark green eyes
Tornpelt - a grey and white tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes
Crowflight - a dark grey fluffy tom with brown eyes
Jayshine - a silver and grey fluffy tom with grey eyes
Raindapple - a light blue speckled tom with amber eyes and a fluffy tail
Wetpatch - a small, stocky, white and dark grey tabby she-cat with aquamarine eyes

Apprentices
Bluepaw - a blue calico she-cat with dark ginger paws and yellow eyes
Lichenpaw - a cream tom with brown points and grey eyes
Ripplepaw - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes
Hawkpaw - a dark red tabby she-cat with white paws and amber eyes

Queens
Thicketshade - a black and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes (Tigerkit and Dapplekit)

Elders
Plumfeather - a fluffy golden tabby she-cat with bright green eyes
Owlback - a stocky speckled brown tom with yellow eyes

Kits
Redkit - a thin red and white she-cat with yellow eyes
Tigerkit - a dark brown tabby tom with a creamy white mane, tail, belly, and dark yellow eyes

Dapplekit - a dark grey and white dapple she-cat with orange eyes

SkyClan

Leader
Whitestar - a black fluffy tom with white paws, ears, tipped tail, and orange eyes

Deputy
Dewmist - a light blue fluffy tom with blue eyes
Apprentice, Lilypaw

Medicine Cat
Beechjaw - a large fluffy dark yellow tom with white paws, darker yellow jaw, ears, and orange eyes
Brookwish - a dark grey tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Warriors
Ashbreeze - a large fluffy smokey grey tom with bright orange eyes
Apprentice, Honeypaw
Sorrelfall - a grey tabby tom with green eyed
Hawkflight - a ginger and red tabby tom with bright yellow eyes
Brindlepelt - a lean brown tabby she-cat with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Vinepaw
Lagoontail - a silver blue lean she-cat with red orangish eyes and a silver tipped tail
Lakemask - a ginger and silver calico she-cat with bright aquamarine eyes
Pearlstreak - a grey and white patched she-cat with a grey streak and bright yellow eyes
Songheart - a dark grey she-cat with a black paw, black tipped tail, and dark blue eyes
Apprentice, Snowypaw
Rubblebounce - a blue dapple fluffy tom with orangish yellow eyes
Apprentice, Peakpaw
Patchfur - a dark ginger and white tortoiseshell she-cat with dull orange eyes
Apprentice, Mousepaw
Flintclaw - a large and fluffy silver tom with grey eyes
Nettlewhisker - a stocky, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

Curlybranch - a large fluffy brown tabby tom with lime green eyes
Elkleap - a ginger and grey tabby tom with dark blueish grey eyes
Swoopowl- a stocky, large, fluffy white tom with black speckle and bright orange eyes. (Former Loner)

Apprentices
Snowypaw - a dark blue tabby she-cat with grey eyes and a silver muzzle
Wingpaw - a white tom with an orange splotch and lemon green eyes
Peakpaw - a black and grey tom with blue eyes and a fluffy tail
Honeypaw - a golden calico she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Vinepaw - a sandy colored tabby she-cat with green eyes
Mousepaw - a dark brown tom with grey eyes
Lilypaw - a fluffy silver tabby she-cat with orangish red eyes

Queens
Wrenstrike- a large, fluffy, brown tabby she-cat with ice blue eyes and a long tail (Former loner) (Kestrelkit, Larkkit, Talonkit, and Pigeonkit)

Elders
Weedfoot - a golden tabby tom with bright green eyes

Kits
Kestrelkit - a reddish brown and white tabby tom with ice blue eyes and grey paws
Larkkit - a dark brown tabby tom with a white muzzle, belly, tail, and yellow eyes.
Talonkit - a black she-cat with white belly, mane, and bright orange eyes
Pigeonkit - a dull brown speckled she-cat with green eyes and white mane

Loners and Kittypets

Fitz - a small brown tabby tom with yellow eyes
Cody - a fluffy black tom with a missing right foot and green eyes
Applestar - a cream and white fluffy tom with three white paws and amber eyes
Talon - A ginger and white tabby she-cat with grey paws and blue

eyes
Bee - an orange and yellow tabby Tom with very dark tabby stripes and lemon green eyes
Flicker- a dark red tabby tom with white belly, paws, and bright blue eyes.
Lint- a velvety grey tom with red amber eyes
Smaug- a light red tabby tom with golden eyes
Indigo- a light grey and white tabby she-cat with light purple eyes
Lemon- a golden tabby she-cat with white belly, mane, paws, and dark orange eyes.

Chapter 39: Puddlesplash

[image]

I watched as Ravenclaw and Rainstripe laid out and prepared Coldhearts stiff body. The minute we came back with Coldhearts body Moonwater went straight for her nest. She didn't like other cats seeing her upset, especially her clanmates. I felt the similar upsetting pain tug at me to head to my nest and try and forget everything today. But I forced myself to my paws and walk over to where Maplestar was furiously talking with Snailstar.

I got to talk to her about Coldheart... I could feel this uneasy doubt about her story. Even though it is easy to see that Coldheart must have slipped on ice and hit his head nothing made sense for as to why she had gotten a cut in her shoulder m. *Maybe they had an argument?* As I approached Maplestar and Snailstar were still deep in their conversation. *Should I even be calling her Maplestar? She didn't even complete her trip to the Moonpool and didn't even receive nine lives*. The two leaders hadn't seen me approach yet so I pricked my ears to listen.

"How much material will you need to rebuild? We can provide bracken for your walls and such if needed" Maplestar informed, "your camps rebuilding process should be our top priority!"

"Surprisingly, the twolegs were spotted near the landslide clearing it away" Snailstar remarked at the oddity. "I guess it must have gotten to close to the twoleg barn and their horses that they actually felt unsafe"

"So you can't go near?"

"No, I don't trust the twolegs enough not to hurt or take my warriors. I hope it wouldn't be too much for us to stay here? I know we are now starting Leaf-Bare". Snailstar spotted me from the edge of his vision and turned to me. "Oh, hello Puddlesplash" he sounded genuinely pleasant to see me.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" I quickly ask, hoping they didn't notice that I was eavesdropping.

"Puddlesplash! Good I was gonna go looking for you soon" she smiled, "Would you mind telling Snailstar about that hunting idea you brought up last night?". I turned to face the brown dapple leader a bit nervously.

"So... I thought to help alleviate the extra mouths in camp if you and Birchleaf wouldn't mind organizing patrols to hunt on your territory? Though I don't know how you wanna organize border patrols with us being so far from Riverclan"

"Birchleaf is just gonna station a handful of warriors over there to keep up with the border" Snailstar informed me. "But the hunting idea isn't a bad one! Windclan will hunt for our own no problem"

"And don't worry about patrolling our shared border, we will still but just to keep it updated. I don't see the point with all of you in camp and gaining ti station done so far away"

"Thank you Puddlesplash" Snailstar bowed to me, which felt odd getting that kind of respect from some cat I respected a lot. "I'll go reiterate with Birchleaf" and off the Windclan leaders went. Maplestar turned to me as we continued.

"I need to speak with Moonwater about the moonpool, would you mind fetching her and telling her to meet me in the leaders den?"

"Oh! Umm..." *I guess she doesn't realize Moonwater needs space right now, but it's ok! She has a lot on her mind and a lot of things to do!* "I don't know Maplestar, we just brought Coldhearts body back". My friend looked at me blankly before glancing at Coldhearts still body with the same expression.

"I-I know... I just am worried about certain things"

"Okay" *this feels wrong, she should let Moonwater grieve for awhile.*

"Have you sent any apprentices for practice today? A lot has happened and I don't want them to dwell on things"

"A few, yes" I informed, "two are scheduled to do border patrols, some have hunting duties and practice today, and I got two apprentices on chores today. Don't worry though, Flutterpaw and Sycamorepaw will be on training tomorrow and I'll have two different apprentices on chores duty". I felt slightly proud with how well I was managing the apprentices and their mentors, wish I could organize the warriors as well as I can them.

"Look at you, doing well managing things" she giggled

"Just trying already not to snap under the pressure that's all" I laughed nervously.

"You are doing your best and that all I can ask for from my best friend and deputy"

"Maple-"

"I have a lot to get done, and so do you, so will talk later" she gave me a smile before leaving me sitting alone. I shoved all my annoyance deep down and walked over to the medicine cat den. I pushed my head through the tendrils and my ears were greeted to the sound of sniffling. "Moonwater?"

"Ah-oh umm- hello Puddlesplash" Moonwater was a little startled. The dark grey tabby was quickly trying to stop looking upset and look busy. "I can't talk right now I got to check my herb supply. I was thinking of giving a little bit to Daisyeyes and Fennelpaw since most of theirs was destroyed in the landslides. You can-"

"I'm sorry but I am here cause Maplestar wants to see you right now" I muttered. I felt horrible interrupting my grieving friend but Maplestar would give me an ear full if I didn't. "She said it was very important"

"Oh... umm... okay" Moonwater cleaned and soothed her ruffled fur. Her eyes were red from crying.

"I told her not right now bu-"

"It's okay Puddlesplash, a distraction is good" Moonwater smiled sweetly at me. It was still a fake smile though. "I should go talk to

her now if it's that important" she pushed gently passed me and out into the cold day. I ignored my inner thoughts urging me to follow Moonwater and left the medicine cat den in search of some warriors. I didn't get far.

"Hey Puddlesplash!" Rushfire tackled me to the ground in furry of snuggles. I laughed as well at my mate as we unscrambled ourselves and stood up.

"What was that for Rushfire?"

"We haven't spent much time together, and I was getting lonely" he groaned. A bit of guilt rose as I realized how much time I had been spending away from my mate. I hadn't even spent any time with Sparrowscar for awhile, or Sagelight and her kits, or Darkcloud and his sons.

"I'm sorry... I just feel really busy all the time... and this morning was rough... but I don't think there is an excuse"

"Let us be real here, these last few days have been. A spiral if chaos, but maybe we can do something together" Rushfire licked my check.

"What do you have in mind?"

"Tomorrow, a border patrol with our entire family. You, me, Jaggedpaw, Blizzardpaw, Darkcloud, and Sparrowscar"

"That's a lot of cats for a patrol" I laughed nervously.

"Well, who is gonna argue with Thunderclans deputy?" Rushfire pulled me in close and nuzzled my forehead. I forgot how much I loved being around Rushfire, how easy he made everything seem.

Chapter 40: Maplestar

"Maplestar?" Puddlesplash sounded sincerely worried. His head poked through the dying tendril that used to cover my den entrance.

"What is it?" I grumbled. Sitting up in nest. The air had a cold nip to it, making it hard to leave the warmth of the moss that made my nest.

"Briarstar is here... oddly" Puddlesplash nodded down at the clearing. "She somehow knows your leader and is asking you by name"

"How? Unless Windclan has been chatty at the border". Puddlesplash just shrugged and left the entrance. I got up and left my den amongst the rocks. I looked down over the edge of high ledge to see Briarstar was there with a warrior of hers, Flailbelly, and her deputy, Shortlake. "Good evening Briarstar" I called from highrock. The black tortoiseshell leader looked up with knowing smile.

"I am sorry to intrude Maplestar, but I wish to have a discussion with you"

"Off what accords?" I said with a raised eye brow. Briarstar glanced around at my warriors watching with suspicion and intrigue. Puddlesplash had jumped down and sat below high ledge.

"One of which I want to speak in private with you about"

"So be it, but just you" I growled with flick of my tail. She nodded and looked at her warrior and deputy to stay put. Puddlestar looked up at me for permission and I shook my head no. Briarstar came up to high ledge and we entered my den together. "What is it you want to talk about?" I said sitting down.

"I want to discuss future endeavors with you" she smiled too sweetly

that was obviously fake.

"Cut that dung out" I grumbled. She stopped and gave me an annoyed look.

"I had received... well- let us just information that Applestar didn't leave on the best if terms" the glint her hazel eyes made my blood freeze and realization left a weight in my gut. Hoping my gut was wrong I played dumb.

"I don't know what you mean? Unless you are referring to the landslides you refused to help Windclan deal with"

"And I see the kind hearted Thunderclan took them in even after loosing Applestar to... oh what was it?" she paused. "Ah yes, a landslide you escaped but sadly he didn't". I stayed quiet, my nerves firing in my body. They were telling me to run, yell, or murder her to keep the tortoiseshell quiet. Briarstar took my panicked silence as an affirmative. "Well, I think it would be appropriate to use said information to my advantage"

"If you think blackmailing me will work you have the wrong idea" I hissed.

"If it wasn't you wouldn't have such a panic look in your eyes" Briarstar said slyly back. I growled and glared claws are her. The older cat didn't flinch at my hostility. "I want part of Shadowclan territory with my clan growing. And if they have a smaller territory they wouldn't be growing as large either".

What is she planning?

"That is where you come in" Briarstar sneered. "Riverclan obviously doesn't have that type of force to impose that on Tinystar, that stubborn badger if a leader. Especially if the other clans jump to their defense"

"I don't see where Thunderclan comes into this, Riverclan and Shadowclan have the other two clans between us. What force could I even apply against you if you were to take Shadowclan territory?"

"I was hoping if you attacked Windclan than that would keep them

busy, since you are so buddy buddy with Skyclan they will stay out of it. I'd say you can even take territory from them as payment to your warriors"

"I have no quarrel with Windclan at the moment, and none with Shadowclan either"

"Does your issues really matter in this scenario? No need to answer the question it was rhetorical"

"Briarstar I truly don't know what you are trying to blackmail me with, but at this rate you have over stated your welcome. I suggest you leave" I tried to insist. Briarstars smug façade fell quickly and her hazel eyes became cold with hatred.

"Listen here you disrespectful rat" Briarstar hissed. I glared at her through slits surprised by the sudden change in tone. "You're gonna help me or that little stunt with the landslide is going to be something every clan knows, or at least a twisted version that you killed Applestar" the older leader smirked. I visually tensed up at that.

"You must be seeing things with those old eyes if yours" I remarked.

"You really ready to take that bet?" Her smirk came back.

"Fine..."

"What was that?"

"I said FINE!" I growled lowly Briarstar took a step back.

"Will attack after Leaf-bare, just so I can count how many of your warriors survive it" She smirked one last time as she began to leave, pausing outside the entrance. "Oh I also expect you to inform Whitestar he better stay out of these fights, or I will target him. Or maybe I'll force you too"

Fox dung...

***

"Whitestar I don't really care what you think, I am just here to inform you of Briarstars plans. That doesn't mean however I want you to jump down my throat about it!" I raised my voice at the black and white fluffy leader of Skyclan. The two of us were in his den in Skyclan camp. A trunk with a large and deep hole in it.

"I don't care, you are just as mouse-brained as Briarstar to be going along with her crazy idea!"

Not like I have a choice... I don't even know how to break this to my clan mates.

"What if she turns on us after she us done with Shadowclan? Did you even think of that?"

"Thunderclan can take care of itself, and if Briarstar does attempt anything against you I and the rest of Thunderclan will turn on her"

"I am sorry Maplestar but I can't have that for my clanmates, much less endorse your endeavors"

"What are you saying Whitestar?"

"I am saying I am ending our alliance. I can't have Skyclan conn-"

"What?! That isn't needed Whitestar!" I panicked yelled. Not something I meant to do but emotions where caught up in the flurry of conversation. The tom looked startled but stayed firm.

"I worked hard to build some level of respect between us and Shadowclan. I can't risk that bad blood resurfacing for glory that Riverclan"

"Whitestar please don't do this! What of Rushfire? Your cutting him off from his kin" I begged. *How will I explain this to Puddlesplash? To my clanmates?*

"I am sorry Maplestar, but I have to ask you to leave" Whitestar flicked his tail towards the entrance behind me. I lost my temper.

"Fine! I hope you feel good about this!" I yelled before stomping out.

Chapter 41: Puddlesplash

I might have had to delay some of the patrols be abuse of the snow, but this is really nice. The Windclan was thickly covered in the clean white flakes of leaf-bare. The white powder glinted softly as soft dawn light landed on it. Like the frozen ice the day before yesterday it was kinda pretty to look at, even if it stung your paws. I stopped and looked back at the rest of my patrol. Jaggedpaw and Blizzardpaw were throwing snow at eachother with Darkcloud on Blizzardpaws side. Poor Jaggedpaw was out matched. That was until Sparrowscar jumped into the fight. Rushfire stood next to me and laughed at the sight. I wished a little bit that Sagelight and her kits could join. *Though I bet Sagelights kits are having plenty of fun exploring their first snow right now.* "Come on now, at this rate I'll have to join in!" I called back. Jaggedpaw looked up laughed.

"Sorry sir!"

"I'd say that was a win for us" Blizzardpaw puffed his chest out in pride right as he got a giant pile of snow dumped on his head by Sparrowscar.

"This snow war will not end just after one fight, be prepared" Sparrowscar threatened jokingly.

"I'll take that challange on" Darkcloud smirked, dusting Blizzardpaws head free of snow. We finally left the Windclan border and made our way back to camp. We entered through the bramble tunnel and I noticed the hunting party I organized was starting to gather. Smokefoot noticed me and called me over.

"Puddlesplash over her!"

"Coming!" Once I approached Mothdust greeted me.

"Hi Puddlesplash" Mothdust mewed quietly.

"Hello" I greeted back patrol.

"Is the snow deep?" Whiteleaf asked.

"No, it should be safe hunting today" I informed.

"Than we should get going, see you soon" Smokefoot led his patrol out. I held up a smile but dropped it once the last cat on that patrol left camp. I felt empty and unable to really focus. Maplestar had left camp before the dawn this morning and had come back very anger before I got a chance to talk to her, at least that was what Cardinalrush told me since she was on guard duty.

What could she be doing? I hope everything is alright? I noticed Silverfeather patrol arriving and walked over to greet her.

"Anything interesting happen at the Skyclan border?" I asked Silverfeather. The silver tabby she-cat looked worried and so I became worried.

"I don't know why, but the Skyclan warriors are still really distant" Silverfeather sighed, "they wouldn't talk to us when we greeted them".

"Do you know if any of the apprentices did anything? Or even any of the younger warriors?"

"Not that I know of" Silverfeather and I pricked our ears at the sound of someone coughing hard. I looked around and saw her apprentice, Sycamorepaw, coughing hard not that far from us. "He started coughing this morning," Silverfeather scrunched her face on worry, "he says he feels fine but I have a bad feeling"

"Make him go and see Moonwater, he could have something" I mumbled.

"Alrighty" Silverfeather nodded a goodbye before rushing over to her apprentice.

"You left us so quickly!" Rushfire came up and teased me. He saw my concern expression and dropped the jovial tone. "Is everything alright?"

"Silverfeather said her border patrol was treated coldly by the

Skyclan patrol. Got any ideas as to why?"

"It's leaf-bare, everyone gets serious" he shrugged. I hoped he was right. We were interrupted by heavy coughing from the elders. "Wow, I think something might be going around" Rushfire commented as he came sat next to me in the snow.

"I don't think so, I have only heard two cats cough" I cocked my head at him.

"I saw Whiteleaf hacking a lung this morning and Firepaw went to Moonwater complaining about his lungs hurting" my mate clenched his jaw from worry.

"Oh man, please let this not be the start of something?" I couldn't help but start to fret over the idea of a pandemic right now.

"I might wanna tell Maplestar when she" I could tell Rushfire was putting two and two together. "Do you think Skyclan acting weird and Windclan suddenly leaving are connected"

"Briarstar made a comment to Snailstar and he went wide eyed. I don't understand why he and the rest of the clan left. Even Mudstripe, Ferretflight, and Birchleaf were questioning him. And she had talked to Maplestar for awhile before that"

"It seems everything is going up into the air"

"Mmm" was all I could responded with.

"You don't think we are going to war?" I looked at him with shock.

"No way! Maplestar wouldn't do such a thing!"

"You sure?" The ginger and red tabby gave me a weird look.

"You saw what the Yellowstar wars did to us, no one in our generation want war. Especially her"

"Puddlesplash!" Moonwater ran up to me and Rushfire. I smiled at my friend as she approached and Rushfire greeted her.

"Hey Moonwater!"

"Hi-hey can I talk to you?" The dark grey tabby she-cat gave me a begging look and I felt obliged to.

"Umm-sure..."

"Is it alright if I am here?" Rushfire looked between the two of us weirdly.

"Your fine Rushfire" she quickly turned back to me and whispered. "You haven't had any of those dreams recently have you? Anything about the prophecy?"

"N-no" I tended at the idea of one of those painful experiences, "Moon-"

"You see, Maplestar and I went to the Moonpool but she didn't receive any lives. Which means Applestar is alive right? I mean Maplestar says she has lives but I don't see any and now I am just confused so I thought I would ask you and-"

"Moonwater calm down" I placed a tail on her shoulder. "Your hyperventilating"

"I-I just don't know what to do. I know I need to fix this issue with her lives, or maybe I don't have that strong of a connection to see them, but I have sick cats now and I can't divide myself between Maplestar and the sick and-"

"Moonwater" I said as soothingly as I could.

"Are you sure she didn't get lives?" Rushfire asked. Moonwater shook her head yes as she took deep calming breathes.

"Pretty sure"

"I'll talk with Maplestar later, right now you should focus on getting those who are sick taken care of" I advised. Moonwater nodded lightly and put her face into my mane.

"Puddlesplash what am I gonna do? I always had Coldheart helping

me. Without him here I feel so much pressure"

"Looks like we are both in the sand boat" I laughed nervously. Rushfire and I shared concerned looks and he mouthed to me.

'What is going on? Everything is messed up'

Chapter 42: Sagelight

I was keeping my kits secluded to on area of the snow covered clearing. All of this coughing was making me nervous for my kits health. Rainstripe has been moved to the medicine cat den with how hard he had been coughing the other day. I then made the executive mother decision to order Plumkit to stay away from the medicine cat den, much to her dismay.

"Mom, please can I go hang out with Moonwater? I promise to stay clear of Rainstripe and the rest of the sick!" Plumkit asked quietly for the twelfth time. I shook my head and my smallest kit sighed.

"Why don't you come play with us Plumkit?" Eaglekit asked before get a snack of snow to the face thanks to Ashenkit. The silver kit sneered.

"Ha! Got you!"

"Oh yeah?" Eaglekit swung his paw at the ground, sending a snow flying at Ashenkit. She doged and stuck her tongue out at her litter mate. Eaglekit was then hit again with a splatter of snow directed from Screechkit.

"Got you Eaglekit!"

"This isn't fair! Two against one!"

"That's cause its she-cats against toms" Screechkit plopped down into the snow to doge her brothers snow splash as it went over her.

"Which means if Plumkit did join it would be three against one" Ashenkit laughed.

"How about every kit for themselves?" I proposed.

"Ooo! I like that!" Screechkit then eyed Ashenkit and sent a pile of flying snow at her. Ashenkit got hit and hissed.

"Hey! You'll pay for that you traitor!"

"Make me then!" Screechkit started pawing up more snow at Ashenkit. Eaglekit sat off to the side laughing at the teammates turned against eachother.

"Mom-" Plumkit started but I interrupted.

"No, you can't go into the medicine cat den"

"Well, Moonwater just rushed into the Nursery so can I go there?" Confused at Plumkits question I turned my attention to the nursery. Branchtail was pacing outside with Dawndrop trying to keep him calm.

"No, you aren't allowed to till Moonwater is done" I put two and two together

"Aww, why not?"

"Cause Orchidfrost is kitting"

"Really?! Can I go see?" Plumkit asked excitedly.

"No, you can't Plumkit" I sighed. She huffed and started to steam angrily next to me. *At least when I say no Plumkit actually listens.*

"Mom, I'm hungry" Eaglekit poked my paw to get my attention. I looked at my son and smiled sweetly

"Alright, I'll go get you and your sisters something to eat then"

"Thanks mom!" He smiled back up at me with gratitude.

"Can you see if there is a shrew mom?" Screechkit called out as she pinned Ashenkit under her.

"Screechkit get off! You aren't playing the rules right!" Ashenkit protested. Screechkit gave no acknowledgement to the litter mate under her.

"Screechkit get off your sister" I grumbled, "you four stay here and

stay away from the nursery or the medicine cat den"

"Okay mom" Screechkit jumped off Ashenkit. I rolled my eyes playfully and trotted over to the fresh kill pile. Once I got there there wasn't much to look at. A few scrawny mice, an old bird, and a very small squirrel. I sniffed the small squirrel and then picked it up.

This should be enough for me and the kits. I thought and I trotted over to where they were still playing at. I was grateful that they didn't wander off. I noticed how big they had gotten and prideful sadness filled my heart. *They will be apprentices by next new-leaf...* I thought as I stopped and watched them play from this distance. *I don't know how ready I am for that.* I made myself move and continued my tiny trip back to my kits.

"Aww, no shrews?" Screechkit said as she spotted the squirrel dangling from my mouth.

"You can't be picky during leafbare" I advised as I dropped the small squirrel onto the snow. My kits quickly dove into the squirrel and I couldn't help but laugh. I soon joined in, but only taking small bites. I was horribly hungry but my kits needed to eat more than me.

"Mom?" Ashenkit asked

"Mmm?" I looked up at my silver kit from the squirrel.

"Can you tell us about dad?" My heart dropped.

"Umm..."

"Yeah! What was dad like?" Screechkit asked excitedly. "Do any of us look like him? Or act like him? Can you tell us a funny story about something dad did as a kit? Isn't Puddlesplash his litter mate? Can we-"

"Screechkit!" Ashenkit smacked her sister upside the head with her paw. I froze, feeling the pain in my chest grow.

"You don't have to mom" Eaglekit added. He must have seen my expression.

"I-I- I cant kits... it hurts too much to talk about him..." I mumbled. I suddenly didn't feel like eating.

"Sorry if I said something mom" Screechkit apologized. I shook my head quickly.

"No, no! You don't need to apologize for anything" I smiled at them. "I'll tell you all about your father one day, just not now"

"His name was Foxhop right?" Plumkit asked.

"Plumkit mom is too up-" I interrupted Eaglekit.

"Yes it was" I forced myself to answer.

"I remember you told us that once" Plumkit curled up next to my side and smiled really big at us. "He was a deputy of Thunderclan"

"Oh yeah" Screechkit remembered.

"Is it okay if we ask Puddlesplash about dad? Since he is dads littermate and all" Eaglekit asked.

"Of course" I answered softly. *I want to answer my kits questions but don't feel like it... or maybe I just can't...* A voice from above broke my thoughts.

"All warriors old enough to catch their own prey, join under highrock!" Maplestar calked out. Screechkit squealed in excitement.

"Is she gonna make us apprentices?"

"We are too young Screechkit " Ashenkit groaned and rolled her eyes. She got a smack of snow in her face from Screechkit you stuck her tongue out at the silver speckled cat.

"Kill joy!"

"Kits quiet" I urged and looked up at Mapleclaw.

"It is time for us to make some new warriors!" The crowd murmured in agreement, but I could hear Silverfeathers concern not far away.

"Flypaw is sick, does she expect him to stay vigil?"

"Flypaw! Forestpaw! Firepaw! Fallenpaw Please step forward!" Three of the litternates step forward, but Flypaw was no where to be seen. Maplestar looked around confused. "Flypaw?"

"C-cough-coming..." he dragged himself out of the medicine cat den and came up to Mapleclaw. She looked a little concerned but continued.

"I, Maplestar, leader of Thunderclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as warriors in their turn" she started with Flypaw first. "Flypaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I-hack-cough-I-I do!"

"Then by the powers of Starclan, I give you your warrior name. Flypaw, from this moment on you will be known as Flybreeze. StarClan honors your forethought and resilience" Maplestar hesitantly put her nose to the sick toms forehead.

"Flybreeze! Flybreeze! Flybreeze!"

"Forestpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do!"

"Then by the powers of Starclan, I give you your warrior name. Forestpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Forestfrost. StarClan honors your enthusiasm and sense of duty" she put her nose to the forehead of Forestfrost.

"Forestfrost! Forestfrost! Forestfrost!" My kits cheered loudly for their kins apprentice, now warrior.

"Firepaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do"

"Then by the powers of Starclan, I give you your warrior name. Firepaw, from this moment on you will be known as Fireash. StarClan honors your loyalty and bravery" the red leader put her nose once again to another cats forehead.

"Fireash! Fireash! Fireash!"

"Fallenpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do!" She chirped happily.

"Then by the powers of Starclan, I give you your warrior name. Fallenpaw, from this moment on you will be known as Fallensnow. StarClan honors your kindness and devotion" Maplestar put her nose against the smallest if the littermates.

"Fallensnow! Fallensnow! Fallensnow!"

"I present to Thunderclan four new warriors! Flybreeze, Forestfrost, Fireash, and Fallensnow!"

"Flybreeze! Forestfrost! Fireash! Fallensnow!" The crowd cheered the new names one last time. The clan slowly dispersed as many went up to greet the new warriors. However Puddlesplash and Silverfeather were helping Flybreeze back to his nest. I looked on as he continued to cough and instinctively wrapped my tail around Plumpaw.

"Mom?"

"Just please stay safe you four alright? I can't risk any of you getting sick"

Chapter 43: Puddlesplash

I realized as soon as I opened my eyes where I was. That warm golden place that I was in a weird dream. *Why now... what is wrong?* I looked around my dream and saw I was in camp. The clearing wasn't filled with gold snow but golden bright light, as if we were in green leaf. Beyond the camp walls I could see the forest was healthy and thick with green foliage. I felt myself being tugged to go outside of camp. *No... no please let don't want another scary dream please...*

"Leave camp Puddlesplash" the familiar mystery cats voice echoed through the empty stone hallow.

"I am not going out through the front though" I mumbled and walked out of camp through the dirt place exit. I went deep into the forest and felt myself being tugged again to go east. I sighed and followed it. "Since you are so chatty and demanding why do you keep bothering me? Why not send a dream or a sign to Moonwater?" I complained to the air. But I got no response. I groaned and continued walking cautiously through the forest. The ground of the forest was lit up by the golden dapple light filtering through the trees above. If I wasn't so petrified about this dream I would have been admiring it. As I continued walking through the woods I realized were I was going. *I am heading towards where we bury our dead!* I froze and began to panic. *What are they gonna do?! What horrible images are they gonna throw at me. My clanmates trying to eat me? Getting buried alive?*

"Puddlesplash you have to go see it" the mystery toms voice echoed, reading my thoughts or emotions. I shook my head and looked up at the sky.

"No! I can't go through with this!"

"Oh for Starclan's sake..." I felt a shove from behind and spun around to see Pineclaw. I was shocked to see him. This was the first time I saw a ghost in my dreams, much less a dark forest cat like

Pineclaw.

Oh wait... "Pineclaw I have been meaning to try and fin contact with you I-"

"Yeah, yeah, we'll now we can talk here" he grumbled, and started to shove me in the direction of the burial place. "Come on Puddlesplash get moving"

"Well, first how are you here? Are we in the dark forest?" I looked confused at the pretty landscape surrounding us, making sure I was right.

"I'll tell you about this later, right now we got to deal with this dream" he came towards me again.

"Pineclaw I am not doing this!" I hissed, "Every one of these dream has been traumatizing and painful. Do you realize I actually feel what goes on here? I felt myself drowning and I felt my head splitting open to that loud screaming! I am not doing this again!"

"Starclan above..." Pineclaw shook his head and groaned. "All you have to do is look at the graves, that is all".

"Yeah right, I bet there is some sort of weird thing that is gonna happen... like I'll get swallowed up by dirt or I'll get attacked by my clan mates bodies". Pineclaw looked at me like I was crazy, which I felt like I was when I said all of that out loud. Before I could react the black and golden tabby tom grabbed me by my scruff and dragged me to the burial site. I fought him but I was having difficulty in this position. "Pineclaw! Pineclaw let go!"

"Shure" he said into my scruff before dropping me. I got the ground and glared at him.

"What was that for?"

"You wouldn't go willingly" he stated a matter-of-fact tone. I looked around the burial site with suspicion and worry. Nothing happened to my relief. However, I noticed that something was different with the scenery. There weren't as many mounds of earth as there was before. Instead, there was only seven graves. Six were fresh as I

gazed upon them in their neatly row. The farthest seventh however was not. It was a hole with the mound of dirt next to it. I looked at it confused and then turned to Pineclaw. He rolled his eyes and sighed. "It's an omen... I think" he made a weird face, "you are suppose to figure out its meaning"

"Why can't you just tell me" I asked.

"Puddlesplash I don't know what it is, Starclan just wanted me to help since you were difficult in the last dream" he shrugged. "I am hoping helping them will allow me to join... I wanna be able to see Dawndrop not over a border when the time comes" he mumbled, looking off into the distance. Everything started to melt away.

"What about the other cat? The other tom cat, can't he tell me what it means?" Pineclaw looked at me confused before he fully faded away. I felt myself grow tired again as I stood in the darkness of my head. I could subtly feel the cold below my paws as I collapsed. I realized the dream was over.

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I groaned and slowly opened my eyes. My body ached with tiredness as I tried to lift my head up, barely able to succeed.

"Ah, your awake" I heard Maplestar voice. My vision was still blurry from sleep but I I could make her out in the dark den.

"Whe-what happened?" I mumbled as I shook my head. Seeing if shaking it would make me more alert.

"Well it seems you had another one of your weird dream things. Rushfire and Moonwater went looking for you at dawn and found you buried lightly in snow by the burial grounds. The medicine cat den is filled with sick cats right now so you're in the leaders den" my friend informed.

"Oh... yeah" I remembered what had happened in the dream.

"I have to go and deal with something's real quick but Moonwater will be around to check on you ok. When I get back will discuss your vision"

"Yeah... ok" I mumbled, feeling too tired to stay awake.

"Don't worry about patrols, I sent them out for you saying you were busy with something for me"

"Thanks"

"Your secret dream things is weird man" Maplestar laughed before she left. Not long after she did Moonwater came in. It was hard trying to keep my eyes open.

"Hey Moo-"

"You didn't tell her anything did you?" Moonwater asked quietly but urgently.

"What?" I asked kinda loopy from exhaustion.

"Lie about the dream, please Puddlesplash. I'll tell you everything later just don't tell Maplestar the truth about the dream. Don't tell her anything, promise?"

"Ok, ok, I promise" I was very confused, very exhausted, and cold.

"Here, eat these. I should go before this trip gets suspicious" she pushed a small bundle of dried herbs towards me while cautiously looking over her shoulder at the entrance.

"Ok?" I felt sleep tug at me again. I gulped down the herbs silently before I noticed Moonwater was gone. *What is scaring her? Did Maplestar do something?* I though as I drifted back to empty sleep.

Chapter 44: Maplestar

"Hey, is Puddlesplash ok?" Rushfire came up to me the moment I was away from Highrock.

"Yeah, he is fine. I think... I didn't think he would actually pass out. Or that the sleep walking was real"

"Yeah... it can be pretty weird" Rushfire laughed nervously. "Can I go see him?"

"Sure, though I think he is asleep again"

"Thanks Maplestar" he rushed off to see his mate. I watched him go before walking over to the nursery. I had been wanting to see Orchidfrost kits since they were born. She had three kits. From what Branchtail reluctantly told me she had a tom and two she-cats. I know she hates me but I wanted to see me new kin. I pushed through the entrance and into the nursery. Sagelight was off in the corner struggling to keep her four kits in check. On the other side Orchidfrost was staring at three little bundles with admiration in her eyes. Dawndrop was tending to dividing up the dry moss between the three nests. I walked over to my littermate which she quickly flicked her ears and turned to greet.

"Branchtail you- oh it is you" Orchidfrost joyful smile dropped into a grimace as she realized it was me. "I guess you came to see my kits"

"Can you be a little less rude?" I asked with an anxious smile. Orchidfrost mumbled something incoherently and looked away. I forced myself to not retort at her coldness and went to look at the three newest editions. "Can you tell me about them?"

"Sure" she said reluctantly. My sister moved her tail a bit to give me a better view. "The dark red tabby she-kit is Heatkit" Orchidfrost purred. I felt a sting of anger and grief as I stared at that kit. Heatkit was very similar to our father, Breezeheat. She had the same tabby

marking and was the same shade of red. The only difference was this she-kit had a grey tabby face and paws. I can understand why my sister gave the kit that name.

"She looks like dad" I said, trying hard to not emote my mixed feelings about him. My sister didn't say anything about it but continued with the kits.

"Then the brown and white tabby tom-kit is Elmkit". I let my eyes wander to the tom. He was a much better mixture of Orchidfrost and Branchtail. His brown patches and tabby markings were similar to that of Branchtail, but his creamy white color and round ears were definitely from Orchidfrost.

"And the last one?"

"Her name is Bumblekit, she is the oldest". The second she-kit was a white tortoiseshell like Orchidfrosts other daughter Cardinalrush. However Bumblekit had a lighter red than her older half kin.

"They are all beautiful kits" I purred. I didn't want to make Orchidfrost more angry than she probably already is.

"Yeah, I cant wait to see them grow up" she smiles softly. I hadn't seen the white tortoiseshell smile like that since we were apprentices. I wanted to say something to her but nothing came out.

"You should get going though Maplestar" Dawndrop said as she began to gently nudge me out of the nursery.

"What? Why?"

"I wanna keep visitations down with all this sickness, no need to risk the kits health" Dawndrop said as I left the nursery. I glared at the creamy orange tabby before trudging into the snow covered clearing.

First Briarstar and now this sickness?! Is Starclan punishing me... and I still gotta find time to look for Applestar... and tell my clanmates about the war and Skyclans withdrawal of alliance... and figure out why a dark forest cat attacked Applestar but not me... and what Puddlesplash's new dream is about, and the old prophecy that I guess hasn't been

fulfilled...

"Maplestar!" Ravenclaw came up to me looking sour.

"What is it?"

"None of the apprentices have come to clear out the elders bedding" he complained. "Puddlesplash was doing it, which I am grateful to the deputy for, but it is an apprentice duty"

"Sorry, I have them all out for practice or patrols, I'll have one of the older warriors do it"

"That's not the point" Ravenclaw grumbled, "doing the chores build respect and a sense of duty in an apprentice"

"So does training," I argued, "I'll send some cat later, I got thing to do though so good bye". I left the elder standing in the snowy clearing looking steamed. I felt angry towards myself. *Damm Fox dung! You are failing pretty hard here Mapleclaw*

"Cardinalrush give that back!" I heard Flutterpaw yell. I looked over and saw my kin trotting away with a tiny mouse in her jaw. The orange and grey tabby apprentice running after her. "Cardinalrush!"

"What is going on here?" I walked over. Cardinalrush looked annoyed as I approached while Flutterpaw looked relieved.

"She took a mouse I was planning on giving Puddlesplash since I know he hadn't eaten all day or yesterday, can you make her give it back please?" She asked nicely. Cardinalrush dropped it and glared at the apprentice.

"Well I haven't eaten either! Puddlepaw should get his own damm food!"

"Hey! He has been super busy unlike you lazy bones!"

"Hey! That is enough!" I growled. Both young cats stopped quarreling. I felt my tummy hurt from hunger and looked at the mouse.

"I'll take it, Flutterpaw you should go and see if you can catch for the queens and you Cardinalrush will go hunt for yourself, but bring back something for the elders or just to add to the pile to make up for your lack of respect for your deputy" Both looked annoyed at the verdict but didn't argue. I picked up the mouse and trotted over to the prey pile and dropped back into the pile. I groaned loudly at the squabble that just happened.

Chapter 45: Puddlesplash

"Are you sure you should be getting up?" Rushfire asked as I attempted to stand.

"I slept all of yesterday, and Moonwater says I have a clean bill of health" I smiled genuinely at him. I only felt a little tired, but I couldn't keep resting in the leaders den. *I bet my clanmates are wondering what is going on.* "I am the deputy of Thunderclan, I should be doing something right?"

"Fine, but don't over exhume yourself"

"Got it mom" I smirked at him and my mate just rolled his eyes, laughing a little.

"Are you feeling better than?" Maplestar asked as she entered her den. I nodded at my leader and as soon as I did she became serious. "Alrighty then," she turned to Rushfire, "I need to talk with deputy in private" Rushfire looked surprised and annoyed, but he didn't say anything and left the leaders den. Maplestar watched him as he did so.

"You want me to tell you about my dream?" I asked.

"Of course, that was the weird dream thing you from Starclan right?"

"Well, yeah of course" I watched Maplestar closely. Moonwaters warning and pleading echoed in my head. *I trust both of them, so why would Moonwater want me to lie to Maplestar? I guess I should and then talk to Moonwater about it, just in case I really should lie... even if I don't know why or want to.*

"Something wrong deputy?"

"No, no, just trying to remember some more details. It kind of happened really fast". I stood up straighter and started telling my

lie, or at least I was partly lying. "The dreams ending is the actual omen," that part was true, "I was at the burial grounds and the landscape was different in my dream than it was in the real world. Instead of scattered mounds all over the place there was only six fresh ones in a line".

"That's it?" She sounded unimpressed and irritated.

"Well, I did argue with the ghost cats cause this dreams are usually... umm... traumatic" I laughed nervously.

"Who were they? Did they say anything useful?"

"I never really see them, they are usually just a voice no actual cat" It sounded stupid as I lied since Pineclaw was the first ghost cat I have seen in my dreams and in real life.

"That is completely useless!" She looked really upset and angry, but it was hard to tell if it was towards me or the omen.

"No it isn't" I argued. *Maybe I should tell her about the grave with no cat? No... that seems really odd and too much info. Though I think I figured out the six fresh graves thing.* "I think it means we are gonna lose six cats this leaf-bare"

"You think so?" Maplestar raised and eye brow at that. I shrugged at the question. Lying like this was harder than I thought. Maplestar studied me closely. I kept myself calm under her gaze, though I really wanted to freak out.

"Omens are a lot harder to decipher, but based on the clans predicament I'd say it is a likely interpretation" Maplestar muttered something under her breath. She turned her gaze beyond the entrance of her den. A depressed, dull look in her hazel eyes.

"We have a large amount of cats getting sick right now, so your interpretation makes sense"

"How many?"

"So far Moonwater den is filled with ten sick cats"

"Oh Starclan" I hadn't realized how filled it must have been. "What do you want to do about it?"

"I think there is nothing we can do. Six cats are gonna die by end of leafbare regardless of what is done" she turned back to meet my gaze. "You should get going, tomorrow night is the gathering and I want you to report to me what apprentices deserve to go"

"Maplestar a omen doesn't define our future" I tried to reassure. She gave me a thankful glance before nodding me out of the den. I bowed and started to leave, but I stopped and turned back to look at my friend. "What does the sick have?"

"From what Moonwater has told all the sick cats went from having mild White cough to severe greencough over night" Maplestar muttered. I was shocked, but I shook that shock away.

"I can see if Skyclan might have any cat mint to spare, if you want me to"

"Don't bother, they won't help you" she muttered. She laid down her reclaimed nest, ending our conversation with silence, Confused I left the den at that *I though Skyclan was still our allies? I wonder if it is connected to them treating us coldly at the borders. If Patchfur is at the gathering tomorrow I'll ask her.* As I hoped down to the clearing and looked at the medicine cat den. *Moonwater is paranoid about something, which is also out of the ordinary. I'll talk to her once I get her alone, but I am not gonna risk going into the medicine cat den with so many sick cats*. I looked over at the elders den and trotted over. I poked my head in and looked around. "Rainstripe? Ravenclaw?"

"It is just me" Ravenclaw muttered. "How you feeling, Maplestar said you came down with some chills"

"I'm fine, I didn't catch greencough thank Starclan. Where is Rainstripe?"

"He has white cough..." Ravenclaw muttered sadly. I pulled my ears back in shock. He was my mothers father and worry built up in my belly.

"Oh Fox dung... I hope Starclan doesn't take him"

"It has nothing to do with Starclan, our den has been leaking and Maplestar had most of our moss removed to give to the warriors and queens" he stated angrily.

"She wou-"

"Yes she did, and none of the apprentices have been doing chores. They come by once in awhile but they have been ordered not to"

"I can get one of the apprentices right now if you want Ravenclaw, have eaten today?"

"No... but that is by my own choice, the queens need it more"

"I'll go hunting right now, and I'll also see if I can find any moss for your nest Ravenclaw"

"Don't bother with the moss, but food would be nice" he smiled gratefully at me. "You are a kind soul Puddlesplash"

"I am just happy to help" I smiled at the elder before leaving. In the back of my mind all I could think about was Rainstripe getting sick. *You know he is gonna die, you know he is cause he is old* my own internal thoughts mocked me.

Chapter 46: Maplestar

I felt proud leading my clanmates to the island tonight. But I knew it was only a temporary happy feeling. It was something I always dreamed about. Being up in the large oak, discussing the news with the other clans , but the sting of the facade was spoiling it. Behind me I could here my clanmates talking amongst themselves, with Puddlesplash somewhere among them.

"It is too cold for this... why can't we have a meeting during the day or something when the sun can beat down on us?" Fireash complained.

"Oh stop your complaining, this is gonna be a lot of fun like always!" Forestfrost cheerfully expressed.

"No it won't be" and the two siblings continued to bicker. As we got closer to the island I spotted distantly on the moore a group of cats.

Must be Windclan then I grimaced in my head. I didn't know why they left Thunderclan so soon after making plans for them to stay, but I had a gut feeling it was Briarstars doing. As we continued to walk along the beach the Windclan cats started to flank us from the side and walk along side us. Snailstar, the lame legged leader, was hobbling at very fast pace to keep ahead of his clanmates and to keep up with me.

"Maplestar I wanted to say thank you for the giving us a place for a few nights a moon ago" the old leader said with a small smile.

"It was no trouble" I smiled back. The pair of us walked the rest of the way in silence. In the background I thought I heard Puddlesplash laugh about something. *He must me talking to Mudstripe or Ferretflight* I thought. *His friendship better not get in the way durring a battle in the future. No! Wait don't think like that!* Once we got to the tree bridge Snailstar and his clan stood aside.

"Thunderclan can go first" he said with another small smile again. I

nodded and hopped onto the bridge, leading my clanmates in a single filed line across the bridge.

"Damm this bridge is slippery" Silverfeather muttered. I hopped down off the bride and took glance back at my clanmates still crossing. Most were confident crossing while some parts of the line were slowed down or stopped because some of my clan mates were nervous. I sighed and shook my head before pushing through some bushes and into the snow covered clearing that was the gathering place. The snow was a clean unbroken sheet across the clearing, untouched by cats. It was pretty to say the least, but I don't care to much for scenery. I walked over to the base of the large oak where the leaders will be and waited. As my cats and Windclan cats began to filter into the clearing I spotted Puddlesplash talking with Mudstripe. I think Puddlesplash said congrats to Mudstripe before Puddlesplash left and came to my side.

"What was that all about?"

"Oh, him and Flowerbreeze will be expecting kits" he smiled softly at his paws. "He also told me that Swiftwater and Leafbloom named one of their kits after me, Splashkit, for helping Leafbloom get her kits to Thunderclan"

"That's nice" I nudged him jokingly, "Hero Puddlesplash!"

"Oh come one..." he gave me an embarrassed laugh. "Oh! Here comes Birchleaf and Snailstar!" Puddlesplash sounded eager.

"Hello Puddlesplash!"

"Hi Birchleaf" Puddlesplash greeted the tortoiseshell Windclan cat. "Hello Snailstar"

"Greeting to you too" Snailstar smiled at my deputy. "Did you hear about Leafbloom and Swiftwaters kit names?"

"Yep, I feel kind of honored for them to do that" he said sheepishly. "I didn't think I left that big of an impression"

"You are a very kind cat, they hope Splashkit will be just like you" Birchleaf gave him a confident grin.

"It is hard to be Puddlesplash" I chimed in jokingly. Birchleaf laughed a little at my joke. Snailstar had begun looking at the direction of the tree bridge. Soon Briarstar has entered the clearing with her clan and I bristled at the sight. Closely following behind Briarstar was her kin and deputy Shortlake. Shortlake was a silver tom with stump for a tail. Briarstar was from an older litter than her smaller brother. Shortlake was known to be the reasonable one and keeps the Riverclan leaders grounded, but after Briarstars blackmailing conversation I doubt the rumors.

"Greeting Briarstar" Snailstar greeted codly. She didn't acknowledge him till her brother shoulder bumbed her and cleared his throat loudly.

"Hello to you too" the old leader grumbled. She spotted me and Puddlesplash quickly. "Why hello! You must be the deputy, we didn't get to talk much" she lied. I wanted to rake my claws along her pelt.

"Umm... hi?" Puddlesplash was a little confused.

"I'd say, I am surprised Maplestar would pick you since you really don't look the part" Briarstar said bluntly, remarking his pelt and two different colored eyes. Puddlesplash scrunched up from the comment and I growled at her. However it was Shortlake that scolded her.

"Briarstar..."

"What, he is a very odd cat. Your friends with Tornpelt right"

"Yes, I am" he tried to not stutter. I felt my anger grow exponentially.

"She spoke highly of you when I made some inquiries, though you seem to be a nervous reck" she commented.

"Briarstar!" Shortlake shoved his sister hard and she shot him a glare. Thankfully she held her tongue after that.

"Looks like Skyclan and Shadowclan have arrived" Snailstar stated. I looked over to see Whitestar and Tinystar approaching, but with no

deputy's.

Huh...

"Hello Whitestar" Puddlesplash greeted first with such happiness. Whitestar seemed kind of surprised by Puddlesplash being here but smiled quickly.

"Hello Puddlesplash, I hope Rushfire is doing well?"

"Yes he is, he is actually here tonight"

"Well then Curlybranch and Elkleap will be happy to see their elder brother"

"Hello Tinystar" Snailstar greeted.

"Where is Sandheart?" Birchleaf asked as she looked around.

"He is under the weather at this moment" Tinystar informed blankly.

"And Dewmist?" Puddlesplash inquired

"Sadly he is also sick" Whitestar muttered.

"Shall we start then" Briarstar didn't wait for us to answer but instead started to climb. I followed suite with Whitestar and Tinystar behind me. Snailstar struggled up the tree last and sat wobbly at the lowest branch. Puddlesplash, Birchleaf, and Shortlake sat at the base facing the crowd. The crowd had died down its talking and had given the leaders their attention. I felt so many eyes on me it made my skin crawl.

"I'll start," Snailstar started, "Windclan is doing well. We sadly lost a few cats because of landslides, including our deputy Wildcloud. Windclans new deputy is now Birchleaf!"

"Birchleaf! Birchleaf! Birchleaf!"

"We also have two new warriors, Rowansprint and Shadydapple!"

"Rowansprint! Shadydapple! Rowansprint! Shadydapple!"

"Swiftwater amd Leafbloom kits have arrived, and Flowerbreeze is expecting kit!" The crowd murmured with a little glee. "We also want to warn everyone that twolegs have been more common since the landslides hit. I also want to thank Thunderclan for their hospitality during the rough time. That is all"

"Thank you Snailstar," Briarstar mumbled, "Riverclan is doing well!" She was irritated because Snailstar just called out her unhelpful response.

Good! Thunderclan did more in that day than you have in your lifetime you brittle old-

"We have a new apprentice, Grasspaw!"

"Grasspaw! Grasspaw! Grasspaw!" The large crowd cheered. It sounded quieter up near than down there I realized.

"That is all"

"I guess I will go next" Tinystar mew echoed. "The prey in Shadowclan is running well. We have a new Medicine Cat! Mistshine!"

"Mistshine! Mistshine! Mistshine!"

"One last thing, Twigtail and I have recently received kits from Starclan!"

Reminds me, I wonder when Rushfire and Puddlesplash will ever go?

"I am done"

"I guess it is my turn" I announced. "Thunderclan is doing great and the prey is running well" is started with, "We recently lost Applestar, so I am leader. The new deputy of ThunderClan is Puddlesplash"

"Puddlesplash! Puddlesplash! Puddlesplash!"

"How did Applestar die?" Tinystar asked. I was a little taken a back by her question but addressed Tinystar directly.

"He passed away in an accident" I answered. Tinystar bowed a little in respect and asked nothing more. Her question made me a little worried.

"Some more good news includes Orchidfrost and Branchtail had their litter of kits yesterday"

"Congrats" Tinystar whispered. Something felt off with her.

Why is she being so friendly? Does she know something? Or is just genuinely being nice?

"Lastly we have four new warrior! Flybreeze, Forestfrost, Fireash, and Fallensnow!" *Too bad Fkybreeze is still too sick ti come*.

"Flybreeze! Forestfrost! Fireash! Fallensnow!" The crowd cheered. It made me feel good hearing the names I picked out called out.

"That is all" I nodded as I relaxed. That was a little more stressful than I thought it would be. *I'll get better over time. Or maybe Applestar will come and everything with Briarstar will be fixed. Or do I have to look for him? Wouldn't he have come back by now if he could? Or-*

"Skyclan is doing well," Whitestar began, "We have two new warriors that joined our ranks, Swoopowl and Wrenstrike"

"Swoopowl! Wrenstrike! Swoopowl! Wrenstrike!"

"Aren't they loners?" Briarstar asked.

"They were, and they are fully welcomed into my clan as warriors" Whitestar stated calmly. "We also have a litter of kits on the ground"

"Those loners kits" Briarstar hissed.

"They brought them to my clan, I wasn't gonna turn away a starving family" Whitestar defended. I felt the urge to defend his actions, but

thought he wouldn't want my help.

"One last thing, Maplestar and I ended the allegiance to eachothers clans!"

Wait! He is announcing that now! I didn't get to warn my clanmates! I looked over at him severely annoyed, panicked, and surprised at his actions. The crowd irrupted into confusion and surprise. Mostly from Thunderclan cats.

"Wait what?" Puddlesplash's confused mew echoed down below but I ignored him and continued to stare in shock.

"Why?" Tinystar was confused. Whitestar turned to the tiny silver tabby.

"There is no need for it anymore, we aren't at war with any clans and I don't plan to fight anyone right now"

"Maplestar what is he talking about?" Puddlesplash asked from below. I ignored him however.

"I hadn't told my clanmates yet Whitestar! Why would you announce that!?"

"It isn't my fault you didn't tell your warriors, I told mine. And besides it is news all the clans need to hear and know of" he stated calmly.

"I guess we should end the gathering then" Snailstar muttered.

"Yeah..." I growled. I jumped down and flicked my tail for my clanmates. Puddlesplash came quickly to my side concerned.

"When did you talk with Whitestar?"

"Puddlesplash it doesn't matter anymore" I said with a lash of my tail.

Chapter 47: Puddlesplash

"Coppernose you can stay and grieve if you want" I stated to the black tom. He shook his head.

"It's alright, going on patrol will keep me distracted"

"You sure Coppernose?"

"Yeah, Sycamorepaw would have wanted me to keep going"

"Alright, if you say so. We have a bit of ground to cover so let's go" I muttered. I gave Coppernose a comforting look before leading my patrol out. Our trip was to cover the Windclan border. I was only supposed to be bringing Nightrain, Blizzardpaw, and Iceeye but Coppernose wanted to come along. I think he wanted to spend more time with Nightrain after losing his brother. *I noticed him and Nightrain have gotten close.*

"How long will this patrol take, I wanna be back to take my normal nap" Iceeye mumbled in the back. Coppernose couldn't help but laugh at the nostalgia of his old mentor. I think him laughing was a good sign

"Don't worry Iceeye, this should take only the normal amount of time" I chuckled a little.

"Hey Puddlesplash!" Moonwater called out my name. We weren't that far from camp so she caught up pretty quickly.

"What is it Moonwater?" I stopped the group.

"I wanted to talk to you in private" she whispered to me once she caught up completely. I shrugged and turned to the patrol.

"You guys can continue on with out me, Nightrain will lead"

"Sure Puddlesplash!" Nightrain smiled and walked beside Coppernose as she continued on with their trip to the border.

"Catch up soon Kin!" Blizzardpaw smiled before running up to catch up with the others. I turned to Moonwater.

"What do you need to talk about? Is it about you wanting me to lie?" I whispered.

"Yeah, I been trying to get you alone but Maplestar is watching me like a hawk" she mumbled.

"I'm confused" I looked at her with worry. "Why is Maplestar watching?"

"I'll tell you why, I promise, but I need to know what really happened in your dream. Was there really six graves or did you make that up?"

"No there were graves... just not six. There was a seventh"

"What was unique about it? It seems to be if you didn't mention it to Maplestar" Moonwater sounded sporadic as she spoke. It kind of worried me about her sanity.

"Well... it was just a hole with a mound of dirt next to it, I think it was meant for a cat but it was empty and ready to be used"

"I knew it!" She leaped in joy and I kind took a step backwards, startled. "Puddlesplash I knew she was lying! I knew it!"

"What, what was she lying about?"

"Think about it, a grave unused? Cause the cat isn't dead!" She must have seen I was still confused and took a few steps back. "Oh yeah, I really should explain"

"Yeah please"

"Ok, since Maplestar came back from the moonpool and Coldheart... well... since Coldheartd death, I noticed she didn't have nine lives. Of course I thought the issue was me, but wasn't!"

"Wait, Maplestar really doesn't have nine lives?"

"Nope! And she doesn't want any one to know, that's why she was gaslighting me"

"But why wouldn't she, I mean Apple-" I stopped and realized quickly what the empty grave meant.

"See, Applestar isn't dead. And Maple*claw* doesn't want any cat to know that"

"Why would she be keeping up some stupid charade? Why wouldn't she just come to me? Why isn't she looking for him, she really did care for her former mentor"

"Here is where everything gets a little controversial, but I need you to keep an open mind about it. Please?"

"Umm... sure" I eyed her suspiciously.

"I think she killed Applestar, or at least tried to. Why else would she cover up the fact she isn't our true leader. She-"

"She wouldn't hurt Applestar, there is too much trust and history between them"

"Yet she was the only one with him when he supposedly died"

"Moonwater do you not even realize what is coming out of your mouth? You are implying that a deputy tried to commit the murder of our leader"

"So? It has happened before in the past"

"That is different, those were just stories to tell kits not to be greedy"

"Really? Is it really that different? Mapleclaw is a ambitious cat. And everyone could see she had an eye for the position of leader"

"I-I-" was all I could stutter.

"Puddlesplash you can't ignore the facts"

"The loose facts" I muttered.

"Puddlesplash come on!"

"Can... can we talk about this later? I need to think about this"

"Puddlesplash we don't have time to think about this! She is doing more harm than good as leader! She isn't suppose to be leader! For Starclan sake I bet she killed Coldheart and was the cat who killed Foxhop! She-"

"Maplestar is my closest friend, one I have had since kit-hood! How dare you imply she would kill a medicine cat! Or my own brother!" I yelled loudly. "Maplestar wouldn't do that stuff!"

"Can't you see what she is doing? She holds herself up in the leaders den and only comes out for food and to get one of us! She treats you horribly too! She only talks to you to order you about!"

"She is just frustrated since White-"

"That was over two moon ago! I am telling you Puddlesplash, as one of your other close friends, that Mapleclaw isn't a good cat. She has killed cats to get to where she is now and doesn't want anyone to know that Applestar is still alive!"

"If he is then where is he? Why hasn't he come back to Thunderclan! What if this is all in your head Moonwater! Oh Starclan you made me lie to Maplestar..."

"Cause she shouldn't be using you for just your power! Oh come on Puddlesplash you got to see what is happening in front of your own eyes!"

"This is over Moonwater, now I have a patrol to do" I growled angrily. I trotted off before Moonwater could say anything more. My mind was racing as I panicked. *What if she is right? What if Maplestar tried to kill Applestar... what if she killed Coldheart and- no Maplestar wouldn't. She wouldn't do that to her clan mates... Moonwater is just exhausted that's all... Maplestar wouldn't kill her clan mates...*

Chapter 48: Sagelight

I sighed as I stretched and got out of my nest.

Today is the day...

"Oh goodie! When do you think Maplestar will call a clan meeting to make us apprentices! Ooo I hope she does so super soon!" Screechkit bounced around Eaglekit with enthusiasm. I couldn't help but smile sadly and worry.

She never asked to talk with me about mentors, though why would she. Why would she talk to me... or anyone. Ever since the gathering where Whitestar announced his end to our announcement she hasn't been about.

"I want Puddlesplash to be my mentor" Ashenkit said. Screechkit stopped and pouted at her silver sister.

"Aww but I wanted him"

"Well I want him more"

"Fine, then I want Maplestar!"

"But she is leader!"

"And you got the deputy!"

"I hope I get Smokefoot, he is such a great warrior" Eaglekit imputed as two of his littermates argued. "And you are of course gonna get Moonwater right Plumkit?"

"Yeah, I wanna be a medicine cat!" My tinniest kit mewed. Though she wasn't tiny anymore. She is a pretty average sized cat, but compared to her three siblings she is still small.

"I think any mentor would be lucky to have you four as their apprentices" I smiled.

"Aww mom! Don't start getting sad on us!" Screechkit joked and stuck her tongue out at me.

"I can't help getting sappy" I joked back. It was hard to see my kits be leaving the nursery, but it was better than not losing any. *I feel so bad for Orchidfrost, she lost poor Bumblekit to greencough. Thank Starclan at least Elmkit and Heatkit survived.*

"Ooo! Ooo! Maplestar is walking out onto Highrock! I think she is about to-"

"All warriors old enough to catch their own prey, join under Highrock!" The leader called out. The clan slowly started to gather. My four kits bouncing up and down with glee. It sting only a little to think Foxhop was was watching.

I wish you were here right now. I thought as I watched my kits jitter with joy.

"Today Sagelights kits have reached six moons old!" Maplestar continued once the crowd had gathered. "Eaglekit please step forward". I watched as my handsome orange tabby son trotted over and sat down below our leader. "From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Eaglepaw. Your mentor will be Cardinalrush. I hope Cardinalrush will pass down all she knows on to you". I was shocked as Cardinalrush came forth and sat next to my son. "Cardinalrush, you are ready to take on your first apprentice. You have received excellent training from Ravenclaw, and you have shown yourself to be ambitious and strong. You will be the mentor of Eaglepaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Eaglepaw" the two touched noses and the crowd cheered.

"Eaglepaw! Eaglepaw! Eaglepaw!" I cheered louder than most in the crowd. I still a little unpleased by the choice in mentor.

Cardinalrush is brash and rude, with no respect for any cat. I hardly think she was ready for an apprentice...

"Plumkit, please step forward" Maplestar voice boomed over the crowd. Plumkit cane trotting up to the leader happily, glancing at Moonwater who sat eagerly in the crowd.

I can't believe Plumkit will get to be a medicine cat, oooo I am so excited and proud.

"From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Plumpaw. Your mentor will be me. I hope I can pass down all I knows on to you". I was shocked and jumped to my paws in protest, and so was Moonwater. The crowd murmured in disbelief. Every cat knew that Plumpaw wanted to be a medicine cat. It was very obvious.

"Maplestar we discussed this! Plumpaw was to become a medicine cat!" Moonwater argues quickly. Maplestar forcefully touched noses with Plumpaw before glaring at Moonwater.

"Look Moonwater, I just want Plumpaw to make sure she really wants to be one and thought it best to train her as a warrior for a little awhile. It shouldn't be an arguement"

"Yes it should be because Plumpaw wanted to be a medicine cat apprentice, and you agreed to that" Moonwater protested.

"It was my final decision, and I believe I have made it clear. Now sit down so I can continue with the ceremonies!" Moonwater glared harshly at Maplestar before sitting down.

"Are you not taking into the account of what Plumpaw wants?" I asked out loud, the crowd turning to me. Maplestar clenched her jaw before turning to Plumpaw.

"Well what do you want?" She asked harshly to my daughter.

"I-I... Umm-I'm sorry-I-" my daughter trailed off, unable to force an answer out. She was too scared.

"She isn't protesting, now if anyone else wants to interrupt I have a ceremony to finish. Ashenkit please step forward"

"Mom..." Ashenkit looked worried at due to the scene that just unfolded.

"It's ok Ashenkit" I purred. She nodded softly before slowly coming up to Maplestar.

"From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Ashentuft. Your mentor will be Mothdust. I hope Mothdust will pass down all she knows on to you"

Oh thank Starclan... I let out a sigh of relief. Mothdust, while stubborn, was still a great cat overall. Ashenpaw was also a stubborn, follow the rules cat so it might be good for her. Mothdust came up to the front and tried to act calm, though I can tell she was irate. *Probably about my poor Plumpaw.*

"Mothdust, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from me, and you have shown yourself to be quick thinking and decisive. You will be the mentor of Ashenpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Ashenpaw". Mothdust and Ashenpaw gently touched noses with eachother.

"Ashenpaw! Ashenpaw! Ashenpaw!" The crowd cheered, though it wasn't as jovial as it was for Eaglepaw. Plumpaw didn't even get a cheer.

"Screechkit please step forward" Maplestar called forth. Not one to back down in fear Screechkit stomped up triumphantly, giving her leader the stink eye. Maplestar glared back at my daughter

Not even my kits are happy about the sudden change. Good on you for giving that fix heart the stink eye Screechkit. I felt proud for her for that.

"From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Screechpaw. Your mentor will be Puddlesplash. I hope Puddlesplash will pass down all he knows on to you". Even more relief washed over me as the deputy and my friend walked up and sat next to Screechpaw. "Puddlesplash, you are ready to take on another apprentice. You have shown yourself to be helpful and a talented hunter. You will be the mentor of Screechpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to Screechpaw". I smiled as the two touched noses, with Screechpaw forcing herself not to bounce up and down.

"Screechpaw! Screechpaw! Screechpaw!"

"I present Thunderclan four new apprentices l, may Starclan light their path!" Maplestar ended the ceremony and wandered off back into her den, leaving Plumpaw confused as what she should do. The clan dispersed feeling down. Maplestars power move left a sour note to what should have been a happy moment. I went over to comfort my daughter, passing Moonwater and Puddlesplash as I did so. I couldn't help but over hear Moonwater hiss.

"How are you gonna be able to excuse that?"

"I bet she has her reasons ..." Puddlesplash trailed off.

Chapter 49: Puddlesplash

"I bet she has her reasons ..." I trailed off.

"Stop using that as an excuse!" Moonwater hissed. I pinned my ears back but didn't say anything. "Plumpaw had a gift with herbs and passion towards it. There is no reason to make Plumpaw her apprentice"

"Well I don't know why! It's not like she talks to me other than give me orders" I argued in hushed tones.

"I know why, cause she wants to keep me under her paw. She knows I know she still doesn't have nine lives" Moonwater grumbled.

"Maplestar did it cause that is what she thought fit"

"Ugh!" Moonwater stomped away. She was frustrated with me.

Well it goes both ways I am frustrated with you! Why do you still think the worse Maplestar?

"Puddlesplash are you busy? Cause I really really want to go do something!" Screechpaw ran up to me squealing happily. "I can't believe I got the deputy as my mentor! Oooo I am totally gonna be the best apprentice! You trained two other apprentices before me right? I wanna be the greatest apprentice, better than them!"

"Screechpaw calm down" I smiled awkwardly. *Oh Starclan, she has more energy than I thought.* "I am gonna show you the territory first"

"I get to leave camp finally! Yay!" She bounces around in a circle. "When will I start training? I heard you're the best hunter!"

"Depends, now lets go" I started leading my very energetic apprentice to the camp entrance. *I mean, Forestfrost was energetic but not to this extent. Screechpaw seemed so much calmer when she was with her littermates...* I spotted from the corner of my eye Plumpaw

cuddling with Sagelight. I felt pity and stopped to look up at the leaders den. Maplestar hadn't left.

"Why did we stop?" Screechpaw asked me from behind. I looked at her then back at Plumpaw.

"Wait right here okay? I promise will be leaving shortly"

"Okay!" Screechpaw plotted her fluffy butt right where she was and smiled eagerly. I gave her a nod before trotting over to Plumpaw and Sagelight. Sagelight looked up as I approached and looked a little angry.

"Did you know Maplestar was gonna do that?" Sagelight asked as I got closer. Her voice was brimming with spite.

"No, truly I didn't" I shrunk a little. Sagelight softened and looked apologetic.

"Sorry Puddlesplash," she sighed, "I am just upset for Plumpaw".

"Which is why I am here" I smiled a little. I looked at Plumpaw and she looked up at me with round misery filled eyes. "I was wondering if you wanted to join me and your sister on a tour around the territory".

"That's okay, I don't really want to..." Plumpaw trailer off.

"Thats too bad, I was hoping to show you were you can find any herb you want" I winked at the dark brown she-cat. Plumpaw peeked up at smiled sheepishly.

"Really... but I am a warrior apprentice..."

"I learned a few herbs and I am a deputy" I persuaded. Plumpaw looked up at her mother who gave her an approving and confident purr.

"Thank you Puddlesplash!" Plumpaw chirped and swiftly sprang to her paws.

"Why don't you go join Screechpaw, I wanna talk with your mom

for a second"

"Ok!" she smiled big. "Thank you again Puddlesplash, thank you so much" she blurted before running over to join her sister. My kindness must have given Plumpaw a spurt of energy, or she just hid her bouncy self.

"Do you wanna join us Sagelight? I bet you would enjoy it" I asked the dark tabby. Sagelight looked surprised but then grateful.

"Do you think that would seem to clingy? Joining two of my kits in their exploration of the territory?"

"Nah! I don't think so" I joked. Sagelight laughed and then followed me to join the two new apprentices.

"And mom is gonna join us too!" Screechpaw looked overjoyed. She continued talking even after we tried to leave camp again. "Ooo! Can Eaglepaw, Ashenpaw, and their mentors come too! It would be so much fun! And then maybe we coul-"

"Actually, I was go ask if me and Ashenpaw could join you" Mothdust asked. I turned around to see the grey and brown tabby looking embarrassed about asking. Ashenpaw was standing a little behind her. Mothdust came up to be closer so as for the three apprentices to not hear. "I-I really don't know what I should do and I saw you guys leaving as a group so I thought..." Mothdust whispered.

"I understand" I sympathized, "you can join us. At this rate we should get Cardinalrush and Eaglepaw too"

"They already left, Cardinalrush wanted to start Eaglepaws training as soon as possible" Mothdust sighed.

"Alright, if this is it then we can finally get going"

"Yay!" Screechpaw jumped up in the air. We left single file line out of camp and walked as a group into the woods. I could hear the three apprentices gasp as they gaze around our barren woods. The snow was light right now, melting away as we neared the end of leafbare. This was my least favorite part of the seasons. When

everything was just cold, wet, and just every shade of brown. When everything is covered in snow at least it's beautiful and makes up for the cold and wet. Everything is a little more barren as most of the woods was burned away durring the fire so their isn't much under the trees either.

"I'd say we should check out the lake first!" I called towards the back. The three apprentices cheered at that.

"Ooo, if the lake is frozen can we go on it?" Screechpaw asked. Before any of us warriors could say no Ashenpaw spoke.

"Of course not mouse brain! If the ice breaks you're a goner"

"Yeah please don't Screechpaw" Plumpaw asked much gentler than Ashenpaws blunt criticism.

"You guys are no fun sometimes" Screechpaw muttered and I held back a giggle. As the three apprentices continued chatting away, I guess kind of ignoring the three warriors on the front, Sagelight whispered to me a question.

"I saw you and Moonwater arguing after the ceremony, what was that about?"

"She was ra-" I paused and quickly changed my sentence, "She was asking me if I knew anything about Maplestar and Plumpaw"

"I feel like that was out of know where" Mothdust muttered angrily. I was kind of surprised by her reaction, and also cause I didn't think she was paying attention or heard us.

I thought her and Maplestar were on good terms.

"I heard Moonwater say 'how are you gonna be able to excuse that?'" Sagelight whispered again.

"Are you three fighting or something?" Mothdust whispered as well. I felt corned as these two she-cats expected an answer.

"I... well-umm-"

"Oh Starclan, you three are" Sagelight sighed quietly.

"Its complicated... Moonwater is very upset and-I-I want to support both of them but... but they are at odds and-and-" I stuttered and was getting visibly more upset. I stopped talking and shut my trap quickly. "I shouldn't talk about it"

"If Maplestar is doing something fox hearted or mouse brained than you should call her out on it" Mothdust advised. "I did and it made me feel better". I glanced at Sagelight who looked conflicted about something, or at least something she wanted to say. I shrugged and put on a happy face for the new apprentices as we reached the lake.

Chapter 50: Maplestar

I walked out of my den and sat near the edge of highrock. Watching as my clanmates were doing busy clan stuff. Below I saw Flutterbird talking with Jaggedtail and Blizzardskip. I made them warriors just the other day at the encouragement of Puddlesplash. He said after the whole Plumpaw fiasco I needed to lift the faith of clanmates in me. It hurt to think the clan was angry at me. Near the nursery Dawndrop was talking with her son Coppernose. Most likely talking about Nightrains future kits. Ravenclaw was glaring at me from the elders den but I just rolled my eyes at that.

Stop your scowling you old fox. I spotted Puddlesplash returning with Screechpaw and Plumpaw. The two apprentices were each carrying a mouse. I was impressed as prey was still hard to come by, even with most of the snow melted away. Leafbare still had another moon to go at least. I hopped down into the clearing and began walking over to Puddlesplash. I needed to ask him if he has selected cats to go to the gathering tonight. "Puddlesplash!" I called out as I got closer. The three looked over at the call of his name. Plumpaw looked scared and darted away with the mouse. My brown apprentice heading for the nursery. Screechpaw looked up at her mentor and I heard Puddlesplash speak to her.

"Can you go and give that mouse to Ravenclaw? Oh! And go tell Eaglepaw it's his turn to help Ravenclaw with his ticks". The fluffy she-cat nodded and bounded away with her small mouse. I clenched my jaw out of irritation.

"I thought I told you to delegate some of our senior warriors to take care of Ravenclaw? The apprentices need to focus on training" I muttered.

"Sorry, but all the warriors paws are full. Especially since you asked me to double border patrols" he defended. The grey and brown tabby deputy expression fell from content happiness to something I couldn't really decipher. Though I could tell it was negative. He had been acting like this since apprentice ceremony a few days ago. I

felt at the end of my tail with all this attitude I am getting.

"Look is something wrong? You have been upset every time I get close or talk to you. I know I have made some upsetting changes and other questionable decisions but I need your support in these. If your upset than tell me" *Opening out our feelings always seemed to work.*

"I have!" He argued. I took a step back at his frustrated growl. "You have been giving out orders and decisions that very few in our clan rally behind! But here I am having to defend you! I defended you to Ravenclaw, Whiteleaf, Moonwater, most of every cat is upset! You don't tell me anything! You tell me what your doing as your doing it! You are asking me to aid you when you aren't giving me info! For every cat here to know you're-" he stopped before he finished. He looked at me annoyed. "I want to be there for you, but you are making it more difficult than it needs to be Maplestar"

"What else am I supposed to do Puddlesplash? I am trying things that fit my style of leadership and beliefs, I know it's a bit tougher than most to get behind but come on is that really what is bothering you?" I growled. I spotted from the corner of my eyes our clan mate gathering and watching. I held my tongue as I tried to bring in my temper down before I explode at my deputy. I took a deep breath in and then let it out. I then glared at Puddlesplash coldly and growled lowly so no cat could barely hear me. "I am gonna let this slide but don't you ever, ever speak to me like that again or face the consequences". Puddlesplash blinked and looked away, unable to hold my gaze. His face was again filled with that same mixed emotions I was unable to understand. I looked around and bellowed at the top of my lungs. "Shows over! Don't you all have something to do!"

"He is right" I heard Iceeye mumble as my warriors dispersed. I bared my teeth and stomped away to my den.

What do they know! I am doing what is best for them! I am trying to prepare them for war! War against two clans that Briarstar is blackmailing me for! I have to much going- my thought process was interrupted as Eaglepaw rudely stomped in front of me. The tom almost crashed into me. "Hey!" I hissed. He didn't respond but

stomped angrily towards the medicine cat den. I swiftly noticed the blood on his back and became confused. *What the-*

"What do you mean you scratched him as punishment?! Cardinalrush that isn't anyway to treat your apprentice!" I heard Puddlesplash scowl loudly. I whipped my head to his new commotion to see him arguing with my kin Cardinalrush.

"He was arguing with me, so I scratched him to shut him up!" Cardinalrush argued back. "I don't want some back mouthing fox heart!"

"I am gonna talk to Maplestar about this, but as punishment right now you are not going to the gathering. Alright?" Puddlesplash grumbled. The toms brown tail was fluffed out as he lashed it in annoyance.

"Do it, I was just following her orders. Eaglepaw needs to train and that's what she wants"

"That doesn't mean you harm a clan mate Cardinalrush" Puddlesplash groaned before trotting off. I watched my kin spit after him before dragging her paws away and into the warriors den. I grimaced.

Maybe I have been distant...

Chapter 51: Puddlesplash

I sat distantly away from Maplestar as she talked to Briarstar. We were still both annoyed at each other about our fight earlier today. I felt guilty a little, all the stress of recent moons just came rushing to the surface when I yelled at her. I was actually scared when she growled back. For some reason the idea of her killing me came to mind. *Stop... no... she didn't try to do that...*

"Puddlesplash?" Shortlake asked.

"Yeah sor-sorry I got lost in thought" I stuttered. I put on a fake smile. "Hey, is it alright if I go talk to Tornpelt? If she is here of course"

"Oh, sorry no she isn't" Shortlake informed, "She is back at camp. She is expecting kits but oddly enough she didn't want to come to hear Briarstar give the news"

"Oh... oh okay"

"Anyway how is Thunderclan?"

"Decent, we are getting by in leafbare"

"Same here" Shortlake stated. He looked over at the tree bridge and spoke up, "Looks like Windclan is here". I followed the silver cats gaze to see Windclan cats filing into the clearing. Snailstar and Birchleaf were already beginning to converse with us.

"Hello" Snailstar greeted me and Shortlake with a small smile.

"Hello Snailstar" I greeted back. Birchleaf smiled and sat next to me.

"So how are you?" Birchleaf asked, nudging my shoulder. I made another fake smile.

"Everything is fine... Is Mudstripe here?"

"Oh, of course! He is just helping Flowerbreeze settle down. He is a little protective" Birchleaf laughed a little. Usually the Windclan leader is a bit more stoic and calm, but I think she and I are becoming good acquaintances that we both feel a little more comfortable around each other.

"I am gonna go and say hello, I'll see you two later" I bowed a little to the two other deputies and the leader and trotted away. I needed to spend sometime with my friends. I walked into the growing crowd and spotted Rushfire, talking with Flowerbreeze. I walked over to them and was greeted with friendly mews.

"Ah! The great deputy has come to converse with the warriors" Rushfire joked as I sat down next to him. I rolled my eyes while the pregnant Windclan cat laughed.

"It has been awhile Puddlesplash" Flowerbreeze sweetly said.

"Yeah, it has been" I sighed. Looking a lot more stressed out then I meant.

"Something wrong?" I heard a familiar mew. I looked over to see Mudstripe approaching. I blinked and quickly shook my head.

"No-no nothing is wrong!"

"He is lying" Rushfire curled his tail around me. I glared at my mate.

"No I am not lying" Rushfire gave me a look before talking to our two friends.

"Since Maplestar became leader it has been a head butting fight between our senior warriors and Maplestar, with Puddlesplash here trying to keep the peace"

"Is she that bad of a leader?" Mudstripe inquired.

"She made Puddlesplash double our border patrols and has delegated the senior warriors apprentice chores, which is just mouse brain in my opinion. And oh Starclan above don't get me started on the Plumpaw fiasco..." Rushfire complained. By now I

was staring at my paws, hoping a hole would swallow me up.

I shouldn't let him talk bad about Maplestar... I really shouldn't... but...

"Hey looks like the other clans are here, you should head up to the front Puddlesplash" I jumped up and saw the five leaders climbing the large oak.

"Oh mouse dung! Gotta go! See you all later"

"Love you!" Rushfire called out after me as I bolted to the front. I sighed and sat down well before the leaders got comfy up on the branches.

"Lost track?" Birchleaf joked a little.

"Ye-yeah" I huffed a little.

"Hey, Puddlesplash" I felt a nudge and a familiar voice and looked to my right. I saw Patchfur, my close friend from Skyclan. I looked surprised and then happy.

"Your deputy of Skyclan!" I whispered happily. "Congrats... and I guess condolences about Dewmist".

"Thanks and yeah... thanks" she smiled genuinely at me. "Shrewnose is also a new deputy now too"

"Oh... I really liked Sandheart" I whispered again. I never really talked with the Shadowclan deputy before Shrewnose, but I always saw how much of a jovial cat he was from what I saw and from what Applestar use to describe him as.

"Let us begin our gathering!" Tinystar started. "The prey is running well in Shadowclan! We sadly lost Sandheart during this time and now have a new deputy, Shrewnose!"

"Shrewnose! Shrewnose! Shrewnose!"

"Troutscale is also pregnant with Lynxfurs kits, but both decided to stay at camp tonight" I was a little surprised but I felt joyful for my friend.

He deserves a cat better than Swanfeather. I'll congratulate him the next time I see him.

"That is all" Tinystar ended.

"Thank you Tinystar and my condolences for the loss of Sandheart, he was an amazing cat" Snailstar said before standing up. "The prey in Windclan is running well! I would like to inform every cat that our camp is completed, thanks to Thunderclan giving us supplies to begin rebuilding!" He bowed a little to Maplestar, who didn't give any acknowledgement. "That is all"

"Alrighty, well the prey on Skyclan is running well" Whitestar started. "Skyclan also lost a deputy recently, Dewmist, but now our new deputy is Patchfur!"

"Patchfur! Patchfur! Patchfur!"

"We also have two new warriors! Snowynose and Wingpatch!"

"Snowynose! Wingpatch! Snowynose! Wingpatch!"

"That is all"

"Prey in Thunderclan is running well" Maplestar began. "We have three new warriors! Flutterbird, Jaggedtail, and Blizzardskip!"

"Flutterbird! Jaggedtail! Blizzardskip!"

"We also have four new warriors apprentices! Eaglepaw, Plumpaw, Ashenpaw, and Screechpaw!"

"Eaglepaw! Plumpaw! Ashenpaw! Screechpaw!"

"Nightrain and Coppernose are expecting now as well!" A few murmurs of congrats surfaced through the crowd directed at the two new expecting parents, Nightrain and Coppernose. I looked up at my leader mostly to give a apologetic smile but she was looking at Briarstar. The two she-cat leaders giving an odd look to each other. Maplestar giving a cold, hateful one while Briarstar was smirking.

What the?

"I also want to state a warning!"

What is Maplestar thinking? A warning? To who?

"Briarstar and I plan to wage war against Shadowclan and Windclan if the do not grant us these demands!" The second she finished that sentence the entire gathering burst into an angry furry of protests and questions. I went wide eye with shock and confusion.

"What do you mean war?!"

"Like you cats deserve to give any demands!"

"Didn't we just finish a war a few seasons ago?!"

"Puddlesplash did you something about this?" Birchleaf shook me. I looked over at her stammering.

"I-I has no idea- I-I really didn't no wha-why-" Birchleaf believed me and turned to Shortlake.

"Did you?"

"She talked about it, but I thought Briarstar was just mumbling about the good old days or something" Shortlake wasn't as surprised as me.

"That's what she came to Whitestar about! She wanted him to join her side!" Patchfur hissed.

"This is getting out of paw" Shrewnose looked over the crowd as he was getting wilder and wilder.

"What-why would you want to set demands?" Snailstar asked.

"Cause they are high and mighty fox hearts! That's why!" Tinystar hissed. "I don't care what your demands are I would rather jump into a fox den then met them!" I was shaking.

Maplestar wouldn't do this... Maplestar is my best friend... Maplestar

wouldn't want to wage war... she wouldn't... please let this be a dream... oh please Starclan let this be a dream.

"Our demands are simple. First Shadowclan must give territory to Riverclan and Windclan give territory to Thunderclan!" Briarstar stated proudly and louder than the crowd.

"Oh go to the dark forest with those demands!" Tinystar yowled.

"And I am not giving up territory! My clan is growing, I need territory to feed them!" Snailstar argued.

"Fine! Then we will wage war until you break!" Briarstar hissed.

"You should have taken the demands" Maplestar grumbled.

Starclan Damm you Maplestar! I trotted forward a little and angrily turned around and looked up at the tree. "Maplestar have you lost your mind!" I yelled loudly. Maplestar looked down at me surprised before glaring.

"Be quiet Puddlesplash!" I heard her hiss a warning.

"No! No I am not gonna shut my trap! You want to go to war?! Why didn't you tell me!"

"I don't need to tell you everything!" She argued.

"Yes you do! I am the one who has to advise you! Bit oh nope! I am just some cat to order around and deal out your mouse dung orders!" I looked at the other leaders. "I do not and will not endorse these actions, neither will the rest of Thunderclan!"

"Puddlesplash!" Maplestar dropped down and came face to face with me. The fury in her hazel eyes burning into me. I would have been scared but I was so pissed.

"What are you gonna do? Demote me from deputy?"

"You know what yeah! I am going to! You have been nothing but a grumpy pain in my tail!" I realized now the crowd was quieter as they watched the leader and deputy have at it.

"Good! I wouldn't want to be the deputy to a bloody coward like you! I don't want to be part of this anymore! If you wanna screw everything up! Be my guest cause I am leaving! Good luck with trying to get everyone on your side you fox brained, horrible, pathetic leader!" I turned around an bolted, running as fast as I could through the crowd.

"Puddlesplash! Puddlesplash comeback here!" Maplestar called out. I didn't look back. I didn't stop. I pushed through some ferns and swiftly trotted across the tree bridge. I stopped midway as my angry thought process came to a stop.

What did I just do? Am I really gonna leave Rushfire? My home? My family and friends? I looked back at the island and pinned my ears. I shook my head and forced myself to keep going. *I can't keep following Maplest- no... Mapleclaw. Applestar is still out there, he could set things right. If Moonwater is right. If he is, I can bring him back. He can make Mapleclaw see the error of her ways. Everything can go back to the way it was.* I leaped off the tree bridge and looked along the shore to Thunderclan territory. *Can't go back home...* I looked around and spotted the barn where I met Neville, Edith, Nightrain, and Slatefoot for the first time. I blinked before trotting over to the barn. "I could hide out there till I figure out my next plan. If I am going on an almost impossible search for Applestar" I muttered aloud.

"Good, took you long enough mouse brain!" I jumped and turned around. The fur along my spine and tail standing on end. Pineclaw rolled his eyes as he took a few steps to stand next to me. "Oh calm your fur"

"Pineclaw what if some cat sees you!?" I hissed looking back at the island to see if anyone is watching.

"What are they gonna do Huh?" Pineclaw sighed. "Anyway, I am suppose to point you in the direction of Applestar"

"You knew he was alive! Why didn't you tell me?" I hissed as I began traveling to the barn.

"I didn't know till recently, heard a few cats wondering when you

were gonna get off your lazy tail and go look for the damm cat. An- and I met Petalclaw at the border, turns out Mapleclaw confessed to killing me to her before the fix heart killed my daughter... so I had to proceess that. Mostly cause I really wanted to kill Mapleclaw but she was hiding in camp"

"Pineclaw..."

"Oh come on! Can you blame me she-"

"No I am sorry, I had no idea she killed you and Petalclaw... though looking back on it now it makes a whole lot of sense. Moonwater is right Mapleclaw is a murderer"

"Obviously, she is a smart one". He walked along side me in silence. I broke it.

"Ha-have you seen Coldheart?"

"That grump? Yeah... I saw him in the grey territory"

"The grey what?"

"The grey territory, it is- it is a interesting place" Pineclaw grumbled, "That is off topic though". Pineclaw swiftly moved in front of me. I stopped suddenly to keep myself from crashing into him. "Applestar is in a large twoleg place, he was... I wanna say rescued but honestly I didn't think those hairless creatures do that"

"A large twoleg place" I cocked my head, "like the one around the lake?"

"Oh fox dung no! This one is much larger. A twoleg place made of large stone dens. It smells pretty foul too, like rotten fresh kill"

"Applestar is there?"

"Yep!" He smiled. His smile was unnerving with his black eyes and black, goopy wound.

"How far away is it?"

"About a moons travel from here" Pineclaw shrugged. I moved passed him and he followed behind me. "Oh what is it? Is that too difficult for you?" Pineclaw said in a mocking whiny voice.

"No it-it is just really far, and what about my family?"

"Puddlesplash you know this is more important" Pineclaw protested.

"I am going to do it don't worry, I just... I am worried about my family" I stopped and turned my head to see the tortoiseshell tom. The darkforest cat actually looked apologetic.

"I understand that, I wish I was there for Dawndrop and my kits". He blinked and quickly went back to his old smug self "But guess what I'm dead! Cause of the red she-cat you called a friend. I mean! I am surprised you haven't figured out she killed your bro-" he stopped mid sentence and it was easy to know the end of it.

"Sh-she killed my brother? Why- wait... she did it cause she wanted-"

"Yeah for position of Thunderclan deputy" Pineclaw flicked his ears and looked up at the sky. I did too only to see a normal sky. The stars barely glistened against the bright, full ivory moon.

"I have to go" Pineclaw muttered. I looked back at me and I did the same. "Head south east of the barns when your ready to find Applestar".

"Then what?"

"Well, from then on you'll be led on by some Starclan cat. I don't know how but just keep an eye out for weird things" Pineclaw nodded before bolting off into the night. "And don't you die!" I heard him yell. I sighed and continued walking to the Barns. I entered them and immediately could smell the hard stench of horses. I climbed my way up to the loft where I remembered the hay was and immediately collapsed into it. It was nice. Scratchy sometimes but still good enough to lay in. As I started closing my eyes I heard something scurrying around. But I just checked it off to it being the mice. I soon fell into a dream empty sleep.

Chapter 52: Puddlesplash

Outside, the light of dawn lit up the inside of my eyelids. The dim light slowly woke me up. I flicked my ear and groggily stretched out across the hay. *I don't wanna get up...* so I rolled back over and curled myself back up. Hoping I could fall asleep again. I heard pawsteps behind next. They were heavy like a cats. I panicked so my eyes shot open and I looked around. The cat jumped up with a squeak and hid behind a pile of hay; however he mostly stuck out cause the pile was so small. He was a young cat, a little over the apprentice age. He was a orangish yellow with extremely dark tabby markings. I saw the toms yellow green eyes when he popped his head up from behind the hay pile. He squeaked again before ducking down.

"Hi?" I said, stretching out before standing up.

"Your one of those cat eating crazies that live around the lake! Please don't eat me I am not very tasty!"

"What? Cat eating?" I crinkled my nose at the thought.

"Please leave!" The tom cat asked.

"I'm sorry, I was just taking refuge for the night. I'll leave though" I bowed a little before taking a few steps to the edge.

"Why aren't you trying to eat me?" The tom asked, I heard him take a cautious step from behind the hay pile. I turned my head to see him and smiled.

"Well, first off Clan cats don't eat other cats. That is just horrific"

"Harmony said you guys did that... and she hasn't ever been wrong" the tom said as he pinned his ears.

"Well has she seen a clan cat eat a cat?" I asked.

"She said that she was attacked by one trying to eat her when she

went to the rivers"

"Ah, I see the misunderstanding. Riverclan chased her out of their territory"

"What is Riverclan?"

"A group of crazy cats that live along those rivers nearby" I laughed. The tom stood away from the hay pile now. I could tell he was still nervous but at least he wasn't trying to hide.

"Is that where you're from?"

"Nah, I wouldn't be caught dead fishing. I am from Thunderclan actually. Almost all the way on the other side of the lake from Riverclan"

"You're from the forest?"

"Yep! I'm Puddlesplash by the way"

"I-I'm Bee" he muttered. I noticed he was now staring and my brown and silver pelt. I couldn't help but burn a little from embarrassment. Bee stopped and looked me in the eyes again. "Why are you here?"

"Oh..." I looked away and down below at the dens they put the horses in. "I left... there is a cat there that is doing bad stuff"

"Like eating other cats?!"

"No... no she isn't eating other cats" I mumbled. I shook my head and looked back at him. "I'm sorry if I scared you though, but don't worry I am I am leaving now"

"Your nicer than what Harmony told me"

"Where is this Harmony you keep talking about?"

"Oh, Harmony left a few days ago with Breaker to go and visit their friends in the house folk place" Bee licked his chest comfortably, "they always like to spend days over their before coming back".

"Ah, well when she comes back you can tell her you met a clan cat" I said as I jumped down from the ledge. Bee peeked over the edge.

"You-you're leaving already?"

"I'm gonna hunt a mouse for myself and then yeah, I have to go find a cat"

"Awww" Bee pouted, "could you stay longer? I wanna introduce you to Harmony and Breaker when they get back!"

"Sorry Bee" I shrugged I didn't take a few steps forward when I spotted someone running at me full speed. I recognized the cat right as they crashed into me.

"Puddlesplash!" Rushfire cheered as he tackled me into a snuggle on the ground. Above I heard Bee panic.

"Aaaaa! He is eating you! Aaaaa!"

"Bee calm down!" I yelled above. Rushfire nuzzled my check while I laid on my back. His purring was intense. "Rushfire" I couldn't help but purr back. After a few seconds Rushfire got off me and made a grumpy face.

"I can't believe you ran off without me last night" he playfully glared at me. I got up and licked myself.

"Spur of the moment" I mumbled.

"Yeah well don't do that again without me" he nudged me. I smiled softly at my mate.

"How did you find me?"

"Slatefoot whispered to me about you most likely hiding out at the barn, so I came to find you!"

"Puddlesplash do you know who this is?" Bee asked from above. I looked up to see only the top half of his head peeking over.

"Yeah Bee! This is my mate Rushfire!"

"He doesn't eat cats?"

"I told you Bee, no cat in clans eats other cats"

"Who is he?" Rushfire nodded upon at him.

"He is a barn cat"

"Ah" Rushfire looked up at him. "Hi Bee!"

"H-h-hi..."

"So what are we gonna do now?" Rushfire asked me.

"We?"

"Like I am gonna leave you on your own" Rushfire played.

"What about Skyclan? Won't you be worried for them with impending war surrounding them?"

"They'll be safe, Whitestar met me at the border and told me he would stay out of war"

"Oh thank Starclan" I sighed in relief.

"So are we gonna hide here at the Barns?" Rushfire inquired. I took a deep breath cause what I was about to say may seem crazy.

"Hey Puddlesplash! I'm gonna catch you and your friend something! Since you're my new clan friend!" Bee squealed before running off somewhere.

"What I am about to say may sound crazy, but I am gonna go find Applestar"

"Wait... what? Applestar is alive?"

"Yeah, he was taken to a large twoleg place about a moons journey from here"

"If Applestar is still alive, then Maplestar isn't suppose to be leader" Rushfire studied me. "I feel as of you aren't telling me something

else"

"Mapleclaw... she..." I trailed off. "She tried to kill Applestar, and she killed Coldheart, and Foxhop. And Mapleclaw killed Pineclaw and Petalclaw too"

"How do you know all of this?"

"Moonwater told me of her suspicions... and a Starclan cat told me the rest last night" I lied a little.

"You never thought to tell me?" Rushfire sounded hurt.

"At the time I didn't believe Moonwater... I thought Mapleclaw was still my good friend... but-bu- she killed Foxhop... and Coldheart... sniff- and I just didn't-sniff- want to believe it..." I wanted to cry. I was being such a fox heart these last few moons that I hated myself. Rushfire pulled me in and curled his tail around me.

"It's okay Puddlesplash" he licked my forehead. "Will go find Applestar, get everything back to normal"

"Aaaaaa!" I heard Bee scream from outside. I didn't really have time to think as I ran outside the barn. To my surprise I saw Bee near the entrance, being pinned down by Screechpaw. Two mice lay near them.

"Aha! I got you!" Screechpaw said in triumph to the terrified Bee below her.

"Screechpaw get off him!" I yelled as I trotted over.

"Puddlesplash! I knew if I followed Rushfire I would find you!" She cheered as she leaped off Bee. Bee bolted to hide behind me, shaking horribly.

"She was gonna eat me!"

"No I wasn't you shivering leaf" Screechpaw teased.

"Screechpaw I told you to stay in camp" Rushfire grumbled. I gave him a 'wanna explain to me' annoyed look. My mate just gave me a

nervous smile.

"You're not my mentor or my mom! I go where Puddlesplash goes!"

"Screechpaw go back to Thunderclan" I ordered

"But I don't want to! Maplestar is being rude and she made Cardinalrush deputy! Cardinalrush! Of all the cats..."

"Screechpaw go home"

"But I wanna stay with you!" Screechpaw protested. I gave a tired look to Rushfire who gave me the same look back. I sighed.

"Fine, but you have to do one thing"

"Oh! Yes! Anything!"

"Apologize to Bee"

"Why?"

"Cause you didn't need to attack him!"

"I just pinned him" Screechpaw shrugged.

"Screechpaw..." I warned.

"Fine!" Screechpaw looked at the shaking Bee behind me. "I'm sorry for attacking you"

"Humph! Well your not getting those mice..." Bee grumbled.

Chapter 53: Sagelight

I dropped off the two mice in the dwindling fresh kill pile. I sighed and turned to Plumpaw, who had been unable to catch anything.

"Should we go out and hunt again mom?" My little daughter asked. I shook my head.

"There should be another patrol heading out soon, if Cardinalrush even set one up"

"O-ok..." Plumpaw looked around confused. "Wha-what should I do than?"

"Why don't you go relax?" I offered. I glanced back at the fresh kill. Other than my two mice, there was a small squirrel and another mouse. "I'll take the squirrel to the queens, see if they ate today"

"I'll go take a mouse to Ravenclaw" Plumpaw chirped. She grabbed one of my fresh mice and bolted to Ravenclaw. She sent wet mud flying everywhere as she raced across the clearing. Seeing her energetic sent waves of worry over me as she reminded me of Screechpaw. *Where did my mouse brain daughter run off too? Sparrowscar and a few others are looking while I keep an eye on my other three. But still...* I grabbed the squirrel and headed off to the queens. I pushed through the entrance and entered the much drier nursery.

"Ooo! Look mom! Sagelight brought a squirrel for you!" I heard Elmkit declare as he raced over. "Wow! It is had big as me!"

"That's cause your really small" Heatkit mocked from where her mother was curled up in a nest.

"I am not small! Your just fat like a Riverclan cat!"

"Elmkit! Heatkit! Stop insulting eachother" Orchidfrost scolded. Nightrain chuckled a little.

"They sound like me and Slatefoot when we were kits" Nightrain commented. "Hi Sagelight!"

"Hi guys" I mewed through the squirrel. I placed it between the two queens and they began to slowly munch on it.

"Guess it's still muddy outside" Orchidfrost guesses from my mud covered paws and underbelly.

"Yeah, I am gonna be cleaning my pelt for moons" I grumbled.

"Aww... that means we can't go outside and play" Heatkit grumbled.

"There is still plenty of room to play in here" Nightrain commented.

"Will you play with us Nightrain?" Elmkit asked. The dark speckled she-cat laughed.

"I can try, but let me eat first"

"Hows your kits taking apprentice life?" Orchidfrost asked earnestly. I pinned my ears back at the question and the two queens saw my disheartening expression. "Kits why don't you go and visit Ravenclaw? I bet he has plenty of stories to tell you"

"But Nightrain was gonna play with us" Elmkit protested. Heatkit grabbed his scruff and yanked a little.

"Elmkit that doesn't matter! Mom is letting us go outside!" Heatkit squealed as she scurried out of the nursery. Elmkit chased after her calling out.

"Wait up Heatkit!"

"What's wrong Sagelight?" Orchidfrost asked as soon as her kits left the nursery. Nightrain and her watched me with anxious eyes. I sighed and confessed my worries.

"I am worried about all my kits" I mumbled. "I woke up this morning to see Eaglepaw heading to the medicine at den with a new scratch. I haven't seen Screechpaw all day, and so now their are warriors looking for her, which is terrifying me. Plumpaw is

doing okay, but I can see she isn't happy being a warrior apprentice. And Ashenpaw is trying to act like a warrior when she should try and focus on training" I wanted to cry. "I feel useless...."

"Have you tried talking to Cardinalrush about Eaglepaw?" Orchidfrost asked, which Nightrain scoffed at.

"No offense Orchidfrost, but talking to Cardinalrush is like trying to befriend a badger" Nightrain commented, "She would scratch your face off than take criticism"

"Oh..." Orchidfrost mumbled.

"And I highly doubt Maplestar would be any help, she hasn't left her den since she announced her new deputy last night"

"Rushfire disappeared last night too" I mumbled. "I am wondering now if Screechpaw went with him"

"He most likely went to look for Puddlesplash and be with him" Nightrain advised. "I bet he is at the barn I use to live at"

"You think Screechpaw is there too?"

"I mean Puddlesplash was her mentor, so most likely" Orchidfrost furrowed her eyebrows. "The clans falling apart"

"Tensions are high..." Nightrain mumbled. "I am thinking Puddlesplash and Rushfire had the right idea"

"You and Copppernose are thinking of leaving?" I sounded surprised. Nightrain looked at her paws.

"We want to, but Coppernpse doesn't want to leave Dawndrop and Flutterbird. And I don't wanna leave my brother, and Slatefoot would leave if Springtail will but he-"

"Him and Springtail?" I was surprised. Nightrain panicked a little.

"Oh Starclan! I wasn't suppose to spill the news yet- they were playing it on the down low till New Leaf- oh Slatefoot isn't gonna let go of this-"

"Don't worry Nightrain, I won't do anything I am just... surprised"

"It's pretty obvious" Orchidfrost giggled a little. "Puddlesplash made a comment about those two"

"Mommy!" Elmkit came running in with tears streaming down his face. All the queens reacted fast and bristled.

"What is it Elmkit!? What's wrong!?" We couldn't desifer what the little tom kit was saying. Than Ashenpaw ran in.

"Mom! It's Plumpaw and Heatkit!" Ashenpaw said in a panic. My eyes went wide as Orchidfrost followed me rushingly out of the nursery and pass my daughter. "They are in the medicine at den". I didn't even take a second thought I bolted towards the cave with Orchidfrost at my heel. We rushed into the medicine cat den where, once our eyes adjusted, saw Plumpaw licking a wound. Heatkit was attached to Moonwater. The little kit was shaking like a leaf in the wind.

"What happened?" I walked over to Plumpaw and sniffed her wound. Plumpaw flinched but didn't say anything. She looked at her paws ready to cry. Moonwater has now pushed Heatkit to Orchidfrost. Heatkit began to shake less but was still traumatized. "Moonwater what happened?"

"Cardinalrush that brute..." Moonwater growled. "She tried to take a mouse that Plumpaw gave to Ravenclaw when the kits came to visit" Moonwater looked proudly at Plumpaw. "Plumpaw swiped it back and argued with Cardinalrush. Cardinalrush reacted and scratched Plumpaw on the side. Cardinalrush than shoved Plumpaw into Ravenclaw. Heatkit tried to stand up for them but that fox heart scared the life out of her"

"Where is Cardinalrush?!" I yelled loudly. I was letting my anger get a raging hold and I didn't care.

"Mom don't-" Plumpaw didn't finish her protest as I ran out of the medicine cat den looking for that dead cat walking. Ashenpaw was standing outside the medicine cat den.

"Mom is Plumpaw alright?" I didn't answer her. I spotted the tortoiseshell nit wit eating that mouse and I stomped over. "Mom?"

"Mom! Don't do anything! I am fine!" Plumpaw continued to protest. Cardinalrush heard the commotion and looked up. She didn't really have time to react as I launched myself at the deputy. I crashed into her side and sent her and mud flying everywhere. She stood up quickly lashing her tail.

"What is wrong with you?! I am your deputy why are you attacking me?!" She yowled. I bristled even more, becoming twice my size. Cardinalrush's brown eyes went wide with fear.

"What's wrong with me?! What's wrong with you?! Stealing food from the elders! Attacking apprentices! Scaring kits! You have the audacity to ask why someone is standing up to you you fox hearted-"

"I don't have to listen to you!" Cardinalrush hissed. She quickly regretted that. I tackled the she-cat and knocked the air out of her lungs as a I slammed her into the ground. Mud splattering and covering the tortoiseshell bellow me. I heard cats rushing over as I kept slamming the cat into the ground harder and harder. My clanmates pulled me off of the deputy and pushed us away from each other. Cardinalrush was gasping for air as she watched me with terror filled eyes. Whiteleaf and Smokefoot stood between us.

"Both of you calm down" Smokefoot advised. I was still seething. Wishing my glare could set the pathetic cat on fire.

"That crazy cat needs to leave camp! Now!" Cardinalrush ordered. Whiteleaf glared at her.

"No one is going anywhere! You both are in trouble. And don't you dare argue otherwise Cardinalrush!". Cardinalrush looked shocked but didn't say anything.

"I don't want you anywhere near my kits, not even Eaglepaw" I growled at the horrible deputy. "If you do I won't hesitate to end you" I stomped away before anyone could mumbled or say a word.

Allegiance Update 3

ThunderClan

Leader
Maplestar - a bright red tabby she-cat with a white belly, chest, ear, and hazel eyes
Apprentice, Plumpaw

Deputy
Cardinalrush - a orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with dark brown eyes
Apprentice, Eaglepaw

Medicine Cat
Moonwater - a dark grey tabby she-cat with dark blue eyes

Warriors
Whiteleaf - a white she-cat with dark green eyes and a large, fluffy tail
Sparrowscar - a dark red solid tom with blue eyes. Heavily scared on one side of his body
Smokefoot - a dark grey tabby tom with darker grey paws and dark orange eyes
Iceeye - a dark grey and white tabby tom with ice blue eyes
Silverfeather - a white, silver, and dark grey tabby she-cat with purplish blue eyes
Darkcloud - a lean black and white tom with dark yellow eyes
Branchtail - a dark brown tabby tom with dark green eyes
Sagelight - a muscular dark brown tabby she-cat with a fluffy mane, tail, light brown belly, and bright orangish yellow eyes
Slatefoot - a blue tom with light grey paws and ice blue eyes
Coppernose - a black tom with a white muzzle and bright orange eyes
Springtail - a light grey speckled she-cat with dark green eyes
Mothdust - a grey fluffy chested tabby she-cat with brown belly, legs, and green eyes
Apprentice, Ashenpaw

Forestfrost - a white and silver tabby she-cat with bright green eyes
Fireash - a white and ginger tabby tom with dark grey tail and purple eyes
Fallensnow - an all white, small she-cat with purplish blue eyes
Flutterbird - a grey and pale ginger tabby she-cat with blue eyes and round ears
Blizzardskip - a white and blue splotched tabby tom with green eyes
Jaggedtail - a spiky black tom with a large tail and yellow eyes

Apprentices
Eaglepaw - a dark ginger tabby tom with two white paws, two dark colored paws, and bright yellow eyes.
Plumpaw - a sickly dark brown she-cat with four white paws and blue eyes.
Ashenpaw - a silver dappled she-cat with fluffy ears and hazel eyes

Queens
Dawndrop - a ginger and cream tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes
Orchidfrost - an almost all white she-cat except for the calico tail, face, and dark brown eyes (Heatkit and Elmkit)
Nightrain - a dark grey speckled she-cat with aquamarine eyes

Elders
Ravenclaw - a large fluffy black tom with hazel eyes and long whiskers

Kits
Heatkit - a red tabby she-cat with a dark grey face, paws, and yellow eyes
Elmkit- a brown and white tabby tom with bright brown eyes

ShadowClan

Leader
Tinystar - a tiny grey tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

Deputy
Shrewnose - a light brown tabby she-cat with darker brown paws and dark green eyes

Medicine Cat

Sootfall - a stocky, dark grey tabby tom with bright amber eyes

Warriors
Ryestep - a dark brown stocky tom with darker brown paws and dark orange eyes
Sorrelscar - a dark golden fluffy, tabby tom with pale hazel eyes and a scratched up muzzle
Oakface - a white, heavily built tom with broken face markings and dark yellow eyes
Yarrowpad - a dark yellow tabby tom with a fluffy tail and light brown eyes
Apprentice, Pouncepaw
Lynxfur - a golden leopard tom with bright blue eyes
Swanfeather - a thin, white fluffy she-cat with dark green eyes
Cloverstem - a slightly fluffy, solid grey tom with dark green eyes
Sprucepounce - a velvety brown tabby tom with bright blue eyes
Blossomtail - a golden tortoiseshell she-cat with white speckled tail and dull amber eyes
Badgerfur - a black and white tom with bright brown eyes
Cedarlight - a brown tortoiseshell tom with dark green eyed
Morningwhisker - a light grey and bright golden tabby she-cat with green eyes
Sunsong - a dark golden tabby tom with light blue eyes
Shinystone - a blueish silver and white tabby she-cat with black paws and dark green eyes
Snowrush - an all white fluffy tom with blue eyes (he is deaf)

Apprentices
Pouncepaw - a white and red tortoiseshell she-cat with dark grey eyes

Queens
Doveshade - a fluffy brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes
Troutscale - a small dark grey dapple she-cat with bright yellow eyes

Elders
Flamefall - a lean orange tabby tom with bright yellow eyes. (Former Leader)
Tallstem - a long legged golden tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes

Kits
None.

WindClan

Leader
Snailstar - a thin, dark brown dapple tom with dark hazel eyes and a lame back leg

Deputy
Birchleaf - a muscular brownish ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with bright hazel eyes

Medicine Cat
Daisyeyes - a small, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes
Apprentice, Fennelpaw

Warriors
Fernmist - a fluffy, dark grey tabby she-cat with pretty green eyes. Paralyzed from waist and down.
Hayheart - a thin golden she-cat with bright orange eyes
Thrushfeather - a dull brown tabby tom with pale blue eyes
Roseflare - a fluffy, ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with orange eyes
Mudstripe - a dark brown tabby tom with aquamarine eyes
Swiftwater - a grey tom with dark green eyes, white chest, and two light grey paws
Ferretflight - a brown tabby tom with white paws and dark green eyes
Rustfur - a dull ginger tabby tom with grayish blue eyes
Horsepelt - a light brown tom with one white paw and bright orange eyes
Heronwing - a light brown tabby tom with grey eyes
Archshore - a dark ginger and white tabby she-cat with amber eyes
Rowansprint - a dull red and ginger tom with grey eyes
Shadydapple - a orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes
Cricketsong - a black and orange tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes
Cavestep - a tiny grey and white tabby tom with amber eyes
Sunnypelt - a ginger and white tabby tom with green eyes

Cloudyheart - a ginger and blue calico tom with orange eyes
Rainytail - a blue and white splotched she-cat with purple eyes

Apprentices
Fennelpaw- a light brown tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes

Queens
Aspenskip - a muscular and fluffy black she-cat with pretty brown eyes
Flowerbreeze - a white thin she-cat with orange splotches and yellow eyes
Leafbloom - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with yellow eyes (Featherkit and Splashkit)
Milkweed - a golden tabby she-cat with a fluffy tail, one white paw, and orange eyes

Elders
Spekflight - a dark orange solid she-cat with dark orange eyes and white spek on her chest

Kits
Featherkit - a dark grey tabby tom with dark green eyes
Splashkit - a golden tabby tortoiseshell she-cat with dark brown eyes

Riverclan

Leader
Briarstar - a lean, black and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes

Deputy
Shortlake - a silver tom with dark blueish grey eyes and a stumpy tail

Medicine Cat
Ravennest - a black tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes

Warriors
Flailbelly - a large, fluffy sliver speckled tom with white belly, chest, and bright amber eyes.

Mossyflower - a fluffy blue she-cat with darker blue splotches and aquamarine eyes
Scorchfire - a black, white, and ginger patched tom with bright orange eyes and a fluffy tail
Clifffern - an orangish brown tabby tom with green eyes
Lightningcloud - a fluffy dark grey tom with a darker grey mane and bright yellow eyes
Tansypelt - a silver she-cat with a fluffy tail and hazel eyes
Gorsefern - a golden she-cat with white chest, belly, ears, muzzle, and hazel eyes
Redleap - a dark red stocky tom with orange eyes, white chest, belly, and tipped tail
Swampsong - a cream tom with brown points and amber eyes
Reedbee - a silverish blue tabby she-cat with minty green eyes
Boulderstep - a dark blue stocky tom with lighter blue splotches and blue eyes
Willowheart - a silver fluffy tom with white ears, paw, muzzle, and dark green eyes
Thicketshade - a black and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes
Crowflight - a dark grey fluffy tom with brown eyes
Jayshine - a silver and grey fluffy tom with grey eyes
Apprentice, Dapplepaw
Raindapple - a light blue speckled tom with amber eyes and a fluffy tail
Apprentice, Redpaw
Wetpatch - a small, stocky, white and dark grey tabby she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Tigerpaw
Blueshine - a black and orange tabby tortoiseshell she-cat with orange eyes
Lichentrail - a cream tom with brown points and grey eyes
Ripplenose - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes
Hawkbelly - a dark red tabby she-cat with white paws and amber eyes

Apprentices
Redpaw - a thin red and white she-cat with yellow eyes and bright pink nose
Tigerpaw - a dark brown tabby tom with a creamy white mane, tail,

belly, and dark yellow eyes
Dapplepaw - a dark grey and white dapple she-cat with orange eyes

Queens
Tornpelt - a grey and white tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes

Elders
Plumfeather - a fluffy golden tabby she-cat with bright green eyes

Kits
None.

SkyClan

Leader
Whitestar - a black fluffy tom with white paws, ears, tipped tail, and orange eyes
Apprentice, Lilypaw

Deputy
Patchfur - a dark ginger and white tortoiseshell she-cat with dull orange eyes
Apprentice, Mousepaw

Medicine Cat
Beechjaw - a large fluffy dark yellow tom with white paws, darker yellow jaw, ears, and orange eyes
Brookwish - a dark grey tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Warriors
Leafybush - a fluffy brown tabby tom with white chest, belly, paws, muzzle, and dull aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Kestrelpaw
Sorrelfall - a grey tabby tom with green eyes
Brindlepelt - a lean brown tabby she-cat with dark green eyes
Lakemask - a ginger and silver calico she-cat with bright aquamarine eyes
Pearlstreak - a grey and white patched she-cat with a grey streak and bright yellow eyes
Songheart - a dark grey she-cat with a black paw, black tipped tail, and dark blue eyes

Apprentice, Talonpaw
Rubblebounce - a blue dapple fluffy tom with orangish yellow eyes
Nettlewhisker - a stocky, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes
Curlybranch - a large fluffy brown tabby tom with lime green eyes
Apprentice, Larkpaw
Elkleap - a ginger and grey tabby tom with dark blueish grey eyes
Apprentice, Pigeonpaw
Swoopowl- a stocky, large, fluffy white tom with black speckle and bright orange eyes. (Former Loner)
Wrenstrike- a large, fluffy, full brown tabby she-cat with ice blue eyes and a long tail (Former loner)
Snowynose - a dark blue tabby she-cat with grey eyes and a silver muzzle
Wingpatch - a white tom with an orange splotch and lemon green eyes
Peakear - a black and grey tom with blue eyes and a fluffy tail
Honeyflower - a golden calico she-cat with aquamarine eyes

Apprentices
Mousepaw - a dark brown tom with grey eyes
Lilypaw - a fluffy silver tabby she-cat with orangish red eyes
Kestrelkit - a reddish brown and white tabby tom with ice blue eyes and grey paws
Larkkit - a dark brown tabby tom with a white muzzle, belly, tail, and yellow eyes.
Talonkit - a black she-cat with white belly, mane, and bright orange eyes
Pigeonkit - a dull brown speckled she-cat with green eyes and white mane

Queens
None.

Elders
Weedfoot - a golden tabby tom with bright green eyes
Ashbreeze - a large fluffy smokey grey tom with bright orange eyes

Kits
None.

Loners and Kittypets

Fitz - a small brown tabby tom with yellow eyes
Cody - a fluffy black tom with a missing right foot and green eyes
Applestar - a cream and white fluffy tom with three white paws and amber eyes
Rushfire - a ginger and red tabby tom with bright green eyes
Puddlesplash - a strong brown and grey tabby tom with one blue eye one green eye
Screechpaw - a fluffy light brown tabby she-cat with bright orange eyes
Talon - A ginger and white tabby she-cat with grey paws and blue eyes
Flicker- a dark red tabby tom with white belly, paws, and bright blue eyes.
Lint- a velvety grey tom with red amber eyes
Smaug- a light red tabby tom with golden eyes
Indigo- a light grey and white tabby she-cat with light purple eyes
Lemon- a golden tabby she-cat with white belly, mane, paws, and dark orange eyes.

Chapter 54: Puddlesplash

"Bee that isn't a very good fighting stance" I heard Screechpaw advised.

"Than how do you do it?" Bee asked.

"Ugh! Fine I'll demonstrate it again"

"Those two are finally getting along" Rushfire commented as we sat a good distance away. They were near the other entrance to the barn. Bee had asked Screechpaw to teach him a few things. The echo of their practice fighting could be heard from our end.

"Yeah, too bad we are gonna leave Bee. He seems really nice" I muttered.

"Do we have a plan?"

"No... I mean we are heading south to find Applestar but I really don't have a plan" I mumbled.

"Well, you said a Starclan cat is gonna lead us so at least they have a plan"

"Yeah..."

"There! See that wasn't so hard!" Screechpaw applauded Bee for something good.

"Wow! I pinned a Clan Cat!"

"That's cause I let you fur brain"

"Are you sure we should take Screechpaw? We could leave her here with Bee" Rushfire muttered. I laughed at that.

"Screechpaw is gonna come with us, and it's not like she is gonna listen to us if we tell her to stay at the barn"

"Starclan above I bet Sagelight is worried sick about her" Rushfire said guiltily.

"I bet our own parents are worried about us" I said in a hurt tone. Rushfire pulled me in for a snuggle.

"They know we are safe, and we know they are safe" Rushfire purred sadly. "I highly doubt Mapleclaw will make a play at Skyclan. She can't fight three clans at once even with Riverclans help, so I know my mom will be fine. And Sparrowscar is an amazing fighter, we won't lose easily if he does end up fighting"

"Yellowstar and Flamefall did"

"And they lost remember" Rushfire reassured. I sighed and snuggled deeper into his fur.

"I feel so dumb... for everything..."

"Yeah, you were pretty dumb. But for the right reasons" Rushfire said. "You thought Mapleclaw was still your kit-hood best friend, the good cat you remembered. No one can hold that against you you were just trying to be a good friend and clan mate". I didn't say anything. We laid there for a few moments till Bee and Screechpaw came bounding over.

"Hey guys! Do you wanna go hunting tomorrow?" Bee asked excitedly. I looked at Rushfire sadly and stood up.

"Bee I am sorry to say but the three of us are leaving tomorrow morning"

"What?! Why?!" Screechpaw and Bee asked.

"Our clan leader, Applestar, is out there. We need to go find him and bring him back" I stated.

"Can't he find his own way back and you stay here?" Bee asked with a pout.

"Is this a quest from Starclan?" Screechpaw asked excitedly. She most likely put two and two together.

"Starclan?" Bee was confused. "Where are they around the lake?"

"Oh! They aren't a living clan! They are our ancestor that have passed on and live in silverpelt!" Screechpaw pointed up at the darkening sky. Bee looked up confused but Screechpaw turned to us.

"So where is Applestar? I don't remember him all that well"

"He is at a stone made twoleg place" I stayed. At this Bee got excited.

"Wait! I know of a place like that! I came from there! Are you thinking off a large stone house folk place?" Bee asked. I was a little surprised, but nodded.

"Yeah..." I looked up at the faint stars. *Is this who is suppose to guide me to Applestar? Bee?* I really didn't expect an answer. And as if I was right, all the stars did was flicker dimly.

"Why are you looking up at the sky?" Bee asked, looking up too. I shook my head.

"Nothing Bee" I sighed. "Are you willing to take us there?"

"Yeah! Of course! You guys are my new clan friends!"

"Thanks Bee" Rushfire said with a smile.

"Yay! Now I can continue teaching you!"

"Let's get some sleep, we have a long journey" Rushfire advised.

***

I was curled up into Rushfire sleeping lightly. I flicked my ears at the sound of paw steps and peeked an eye open. I saw a blurry, ghostly red paw. Confused I lifted my head and opened both my eyes. Blinking the sleep away I saw, to my utter surprise and fear, Breezeheat. I almost shot straight up which would have waken up Rushfire and the others. I at least calmed down my bristled fur. I stared into the yellow eyes of the tom with worry.

"Breezeheat?" I whisper. Breezeheat didn't say anything but nodded at Bee. Confused I looked over to where Bee was. The orangish yellow tabby was still sleeping soundly in his hay pile. I clenched my jaw and looked back at the starry cat. "So he is gonna lead us to the stone twoleg place?" I whisper again. Breezeheat nodded. Breezeheat than nodded backwards. Confused I cocked my head. Breezeheat, still not saying anything, left the loft where the hay was. Figuring he wanted me to follow I did. I jumped down from the loft and looked around for Breezeheat. The tom was not here though. "Breezeheat?" I called out quietly. But I didn't see him. I felt disappointed and stupid and was about to jump back into the loft till out of the corner of my eye I saw a flicker of a fluffy ghost tail. It had just left around the corner, leaving the barn. Not wanting to lose Breezeheat I ran after him. I round the corner to not see him. I looked around the open field scanning for Breezeheats ghost. I again, spotted him distantly walking over a hill and disappearing beyond it. I put two and two together and rushed back to the loft. I jumped up into it and shook Rushfire.

"Huha- What's going on?" Rushfire quickly shoot up, looking around with exhausted green eyes.

"We need to go, now" I argued. I went over and shook Screechpaw awake.

"Is it morning already?" Screechpaw groaned.

"Why are we leaving now?" Rushfire said rubbing his eyes.

"We are leaving?" Bee moaned as he lifted his head.

"Trust me, we need to go now"

"Alright, Alright, will go" Rushfire groaned and pushed Bee up. Everyone followed me slowly as we left the barn.

"Ugh! Please can we go back to sleep?" Screechpaw moaned. I ignored them and led them up the hill. Once we reached the top I looked around for Breezeheat. I didn't see him however I felt a little disheartened.

"Sorry guys-"

"Shhh! Get down! Now!" Rushfire whispered hiss. We all dropped and hid in the long grass of the moore. I looked at Rushfire who was watching the area below us. I creeped forward slowly to see what he was staring at. I soon spotted three familiar cats. Even if they were distant, I recognized Mapleclaw, Cardinalrush, and Fireash in the silver moonlight. They were entering the barn.

"Who are they?" Bee asked.

"Bad cats, very bad cats" Screechpaw answered quietly.

"We should go before they find us not there and follow our scent" Rushfire advised. I nodded and we creeped away from the top of the hill. The others followed and once we were definitely it of sight of the barn, we stood up and ran.

Chapter 55: Maplestar

"Cardinalrush I need you to pick out cats for the attack at high noon today"

"What do you have in mind?" The tortoiseshell grumbled.

"I need to two teams," I stated, "team one is to be the main frontal attack team and the second team is to be the back up for team one if they need it".

"How many cats?"

"As many as you think necessary" I growled. Cardinalrush took this as a time to leave. I was left alone in my den, which I was glad for. *No one to bother me, no one to question me, no one to argue with me. Just me... and I still hate it...*

I could hear the nagging voice of my own thoughts start to come up. *They are plotting against you. They'll leave like Puddlesplash, like Rushfire, like every cat in your life. All because you are weak and pathetic and a liar. They know you tried to go and chase Puddlesplash and Rushfire far away from the clans lasts night. They know who you killed... they know... they know...*

***

I stood at the edge of highrock, looking down at my clan mates. Cardinalrush was at my side, ready for when I called the clan meeting.

"All warriors old enough to catch their own prey, join under highrock!" I watched as my clanmates slowly gathered below. I studied each face. Everyone was watching me with mixed expression, or just pure anger and disgust. I ignored those ones.

"We are attacking Windclan today!" I yelled once the clan had finished gathering. The crowd began grumbling and complaining

quickly.

"We really shouldn't! We just got out of leaf-bare yet!" Branchtail argued.

"It's ridiculous to be fighting clans!" Whiteleaf yelled.

"This entire thing is mouse brained!" Dawndrop hissed.

"Well if you don't like my decisions there is the camp exit! Leave Thunderclan like Puddlesplash and the others if you don't want to deal with it!" I let my anger boil over. Every cat went quiet, looking around to see if any cat was gonna get up and leave. To my credit no cat did. "If you stay here you better follow my orders" I growled loud enough for everyone to hear. I was met with stone cold silence and glares. I continued describing the plan. "Me and Cardinalrush will be leading team one. Team one will be the main attack team! Team two will be led by Smokefoot! Team two is back up if team one needs it! The teams will be trailing across Windclan territory attacking any cat we see! Team two will trail behind team one a good distance so as to not be spotted but to still be close by if needed! I'll yell if Team one needs Team twos help! Understood?!". No cat made and inquired so I continued.
"Team one will be Sparrowscar, Silverfeather, Darkcloud, Coppernose, Springtail, Mothdust, Forestfrost, Flutterbird, Blizzardskip, Jaggedtail, Fireash, Eaglepaw, and Plumpaw. Team two will be Whiteleaf, Branchtail, Fallensnow, and Ashenpaw! Everyone get ready will be leaving shortly!" I jumped down with Cardinalrush following behind me. I sat and waited at the entrance of camp for team one to group up. My clan mates we talking, sharing mews of luck and promises to come back to those staying behind. They slowly formed around me, with Team Two grouping around Smokefoot. I could tell from my clanmates faces they didn't want to deal with this but they had to. Once everyone had gathered I led them out of camp. It was a silent walk to Windclan border. No one talked, not even the two apprentices. The silence lay heavy on us like an anxious cloud. Or it at least made me anxious. I flicked my tail upwards at the sight of the border. The group stopped and I nodded at Cardinalrush to look for a patrol. She nodded back and moved forward quietly. Her head swerving up and down the border looking for any Windclan cat. She came back confidently.

"No patrols from what I can see"

"Good" I flicked my tail forward and I led my cats across the boarder. I looked behind me as my warriors cautiously walked over the border. Many looking conflicted about their decisions. I clenched my jaw and kept leading team one. I knew Smokefoot had team two not that far behind. "Cardinalrush I want you to go ahead and keep scouting, come back if you see any Windclan"

"Okay" Cardinalrush trotted ahead stealthily.

"How far are we going into Windclan territory?" Smokefoot asked.

"Till we get into their camp" I growled and continued trekking forward. Murmurs of concern came from behind but I ignored them. Soon Cardinalrush came running back. Huffing a little from lack of breathe.

"Hunting patrol-huff- over the hill" I smiled a little.

"How many?"

"Three warriors and an apprentice"

"Forestfrost! Sparrowscar! Mothdust! Darkcloud! Blizzardskip! Up front now!" I hissed lowly. The three warriors begrudgingly came forward. "I want you three to attack the patrol. Let the apprentice run back for reinforcements. Once more cats come the rest will join in on the fight, understood?"

"You're gonna put us in danger of getting slaughtered for the chance that Windclan reinforcements will come?" Sparrowscar grumbled. I glared at him.

"You will be fine! Will be up and over the hill before those mouse hearts even get their claws out! Now go!" The selected cats begrudgingly left and ran down the hill. I creeped up and hid behind a heather bush to watch and make sure everything worked out. My cats were attacking the Windclan cats, but not at full force. More like they were just swatting and leaping around. It was confusing the Windclan cats but the apprentice wasn't running away to get help. *Come on! Run! Get help you furball!* I turned around

looked back at the rest of my team just waiting around at the bottom of the hill, looking nervous. "Fireash! Flutterbird! Go fight!" I hiss orders. Fireash sighed and led Flutterbird up and over the hill. Running down the hill straight into the pathetic battle bellow. This definitely freaked out the apprentice and they bolted to camp, yowling about an attack. *Finally!* Soon enough a group of more Windclan cats came up and from the south from their camp and rushed towards the battle below me. "Get ready!" I hiss to the rest of my warriors. I haunched down and watched as the aiding Windclan cats got closer and closer and... "Now!" I howled! Cardinalrush and I rushed down the hill with the rest of team one following behind me. I crashed into silver tom. I recognized the cat but I didn't care as I sunk my teeth into his neck. He panicked and rolled. Sending me over him and then under him. I got up swiftly and then growled. I got up and growled back, launching myself at him again. He leaped to the side and I crashed into the ground.

"What in the name of Starclan Maplestar!?" I heard a familiar tom yell. I turned away from the silver tom I was fighting to see Ferretflight glaring at me. He had a fresh nick in his ear and blood on his paws.

"I warned Snailstar what would happen, not my fault he didn't listen" I hissed before leaping at Ferretflight . I would have tackled the tabby if only that silver tom hadn't tackled me first. "Ugh!" I said as I got the ground and felt claws dig into my side. I jumped away from the silver tom before he could do anything and now could see I was facing two against one. Ferretflight and Swiftwater versus me.

"I don't want to fight you Maplestar! Your Puddlesplash friend" Ferretflight shook his head, "but I will defend my clan".

"Puddlesplash isn't my friend, in fact he isn't even around anymore!" I cried as I attacked them both. It was just a fury of claws as I swiped, jumped, and raked at the two Windclan warriors.

"Plumpaw!" I heard some cat yell but I ignored it. I just kept trying to keep Ferretflight and Swiftwater busy. At some point I ended up a little but always from the two cats I was fighting cause I had leaped at them again. Cardinalrush came running up to me. She was

bleeding heavily from a wound on her shoulders and a scratch above her eye.

"Maplestar we need reinforcements!" She pleaded.

"Fine, call for it!" I hissed before going back and fighting Ferretflight and his clan mate. As I continued fighting them, racking my claws across Swiftwaters muzzle, I felt claws rack both side of my hindquarters and pull me away from them. Surprised I turned around to see Snailstar. The fury in his eyes matched mine as I turned around and slashed at his neck, missing it by a whisker.

"Call of the attack Maplestar! Your Warriors can't keep this up!" Snailstar urges. I looked around quickly and saw how beat my cats were. Cursing under my breathe I looked back at Snailstar.

"This isn't over!" I lifted my head and then yowled. "Thunderclan! Retreat!" I stalked off up and over the hill, my warriors rushing past me covered in wounds. I looked back down to see Sparrowscar gently carrying Plumpaw on his back. A little further ahead of him Fireash and Forestfrost were supporting Fallensnow between them. The guilt forced me not to talk, not to soothe my injured clan mates. The trail back to Thunderclan territory was a drizzle of blood and heavy paw steps, but at least Snailstar was just letting us retreat peacefully.

Chapter 56: Sagelight

I am passing back and forth across the clearing. My fears and worries for my kits building with each step. Far off to the side Nightrain and Moonwater were talking in worried tones. Orchidfrost was keeping her kits distracted with a game of moss ball. *They have to be fine! They are gonna be fine! Maplestar wouldn't put them that deep in danger right? They are just apprentices...*

"They're back!" Dawndrop yowled in relief. I looked up from the ground and stopped my pacing. A little hope coming into my heart. My clanmates came stumbling in, their wounds deep and covering their bodies. I scanned the crowd as they came filtering in.

"The badly injured to the Elders den! Ravenclaw! Nightrain! Help apply the politics and cobwebs I prepared to the least injured! I got the worse!" Moonwater barked orders. I really wasn't paying attention as I looked for the familiar faces of my kits.

Come on! Where are you three! Please Starclan don't you dare take them from me! Screechpaw is off only you know where so please don't take them away! Please! My clan mates stopped filtering in and I didn't see Eaglepaw... or Ashenpaw... or Plumpaw... I sat down as horror spread across my face. I stared at the empty entrance as chaos flowed around me. Once the panic really set in I looked around at my friends and family. "Has any cat seen my kits!? Has any cat seen my kits!?" I begged as I looked at their faces. Most were gloomy not really listening to my words. I started to tear up as I looked at my paws. "Where are my kits? Please where are they? Don't take them away Starclan, please..." I whimpered.

"Mom!" I perked up at the sound of Eaglepaws distressed mew. I whipped my head around seeing my son running to me. His right ear was mostly missing and leaving trails of blood down his face. I pulled him into an embrace and started purring and crying in joy.

"Oh Starclan, I thought I lost you" I purred with a hoarse voice. Eaglepaw started crying into my mane. Before I could ask

Ashenpaw crashed into me and her littermate. I yelped in surprised but pulled her too.

"Mom..." she cried into my fur. "Mom Plumpaw..." she looked towards the entrance. Dread set in as I looked up from my sobbing kits and at the entrance. Sparrowscar had just came through with a soaked in red brown body laying across his back. The dread dropped deep into my stomach as I recognized the brown fur. I rushed over sniffing my daughter. Her pelt smelled metallic with all the blood as Sparrowscar let her limply fall off his back and gently onto the sandy clearing. I put a paw against Plumpaws soft brown fur. She was completely still.

"Plumpaw?" I nosed my daughters ear. Her eyes were staying closed. "Plumpaw?!" I said in more distress.

"I'm sorry Sagelight" Sparrowscar murmured. "She is with Starclan now"

"No!" I yelled in disbelief. "Please don't take Plumpaw from me! Please Starclan don't you dare!" I yell at the sky but with no response. I bent over crying over my daughters still body. Eaglepaw and Ashenpaw came and I pulled them into a sobbing cuddle. "Please... you have taken so much from me... don't take her too... please..."

"Mom, I'm sorry. I am so sorry" Eaglepaw sobbed. "I said I would be by her side-sniff- I promised-sniff-w-we got separated during the fight-sniff- mom I am so sorry!" Eaglepaw pushed himself deep into my mane. Ashenpaw said nothing but sobbed as well.

"She was a good cat..." I heard a cat mew. I lifted my head from my kits and glared at Maplestar. The same fury I felt for Cardinalrush came rushing to the surface, but this time in a less violent form.

"Don't you dare talk about my daughter like that!" I yelled. My kits moved quickly away from me and Sparrowscar came protectively to their side. "Don't you dare say anything you fox heart! You did this! This is your fault! All your fault!" I kept screaming.

"Sage-"

"No! She wanted to be a medicine cat! That was her dream! But you didn't care about that did you!? No you made her a warrior apprentice! She hated it but she still tried! What did you even do for her huh?! You were her mentor yet every other cat trained her but you! Plumpaw is dead because of you! She is dead all because you wanted a war and more warriors!" I screamed till my voice gave out. I stared at the frightened bleeding leader and then at my poor daughter. "She wanted to help cats not hurt them..." I cried softly.

"Sagelight you need to calm down" Orchidfrost came over and put a paw on my shoulder.

"She wanted to help cats... she didn't deserve this..." I sobbed quietly.

"I know, I know..." Orchidfrost glared at her litermate to go. I guess she left cause I heard pawsteps moving away from me. "Plumpaw didn't need to go so soon" Orchidfrost comforted me. "But your other two kits need you right now. Go to them" she advised. I nodded and slowly made my way to where Eaglepaw and Ashenpaw were quietly sobbing. Sparrowscar has wrapped his large fluffy tail around them in condolence.

"I-I-I'm sorry kits for that outburst" I numbly said. Ashenpaw and Eaglepaw ran to my side and began cuddling with me again. Sparrowscar watched protectively over us. I could tell he was hurting too, he just didn't want to show it. It hurt to much now to look over at Plumpaw.

Chapter 57: Puddlesplash

I followed closely behind a Bee as we trekked along, Rushfire behind me and Screechpaw behind him. We were right now in a dark pine forest. The ground was damp and thickly blanketed in nettles and pine cones. My paws were starting to hurt from the long trek but I ignored it. Screechpaw made her pain known unlike keeping it to herself like the rest of us.

"Ugh! My paws hurt! Can we please stop and rest I don't think I have walked this far before!"

"Screechpaw we heard you like the last twelve times you've complained!" Rushfire scolded.

"Please Screechpaw can you bare it like the rest of us?" I asked.

"Fine! But if I collapse it's gonna be all your faults for not stopping!"

"Is she always like this?" Bee asked gingerly.

"No... I think" I tried to remember.

"She is your apprentice, wouldn't you know if she was lazy?" Rushfire grumbled.

"She isn't lazy, she is opinionated" I defended.

"I have ears you guys!"

"Yeah, and ours hurt from your complaining!" Bee yelled back. That seemed to shut my apprentice up for now but we all knew it wasn't gonna last long. Bee slowed down and fell into stride with me.

"So... could you tell me more about clan life? I-if that's okay with you?" Seeing a way to distract myself from the pain in my paws I took the opportunity.

"Sure, what do you want to know?"

"Ok, so like how many clans are there? You have said Riverclan and Thunderclan so far but are there more?"

"Yeah, there is five in total" I started. "Riverclan inhabits the rivers and Windclan has the moors. Thunderclan has the forest area, with Skyclan right next to it. Than we have Shadowclan in that pine area clear on the other side of the lake from the Barns"

"Wow! That's a lot of cats!" Bee explained. "What's your clan like? Where do you live if you don't have a barn or a house folk den?"

"We live in dens we make out of bushes and bramble walls to protect us from foxes and badgers" I muttered.

"Our camp is in a place called Stone Hollow" Rushfire added.

"Yep! The apprentice den is in a small cave near the leaders den!"

"Apprentices?"

"Young cats in training" I answered. "A kit has to be at least six moons old to start training. They get a mentor like me and have the pre-fix of their name changed from -kit to -paw" I said pretty blankly.

"Yep! I was Screech*kit* when I was little but then we had a ceremony and I had my name changed to Screechpaw and I got Puddlesplash to teach me!"

"And you get another name change after? Cause Puddlesplash and Rushfire don't have paw in their name" Bee put together.

"Yes, it's called a warriors name. The naming ceremony for a medicine cat is much different" Rushfire informed.

"What's a medicine cat?"

"They are cats who learns how to heal other cats and talk to Starclan! My sister Plumpaw was going to be one but Maplestar made her a warrior apprentice!" Screechpaw spat in annoyance.

"Maplestar?"

"She is the leader of Thunderclan... for now..." Rushfire grumbled.

"You guys don't seem to like her" Bee easily picked up.

"She tried to kill Applestar!" Screechpaw yelled from the back. "But he is still alive so we are gonna go get him! He is at the stone twoleg place your leading us too!"

"Cause Starclan said so?" I could tell Bee was getting confused.

"Guys let's hold off on all this info, we might rot Bee's brain" I played.

"No you're not! It's-it's just really confusing..." Bee muttered.

"It's fine Bee, ask at your own pace" Rushfire encouraged but Bee got quiet. Rushfire quickened his pace so to get in stride with me and smacked the back of head with his paw. "Good job!" He scolded.

"I didn't mean it!" I protested. I turned to Bee. "Sorry Bee"

"Huh what?" Bee looked up at me confused. He was too deep in thought it seemed to hear us talking.

"Whatcha thinking about Bee?" Screechpaw pipped up. Bee stopped so the rest of did too.

"Bee?" I asked a little concerned.

"Cou-could I be a warrior like you guys?" Bee asked gingerly. I went wide eyed and looked at Rushfire who looked back at me shocked too.

"Well you would need to be an apprentice first like me mouse brain! And you need a leader to officiate the apprentice and mentor ceremony!"

"O-oh..." Bee sounded disappointed and looked at his paws. "W-wo-would this Applestar make me an apprentice if we find him?"

I don't feel like Bee would do well in warrior life! I don't think he would

really be prepared for the blood and fighting and death so present in clan life... "Bee being in the clans is a lot tougher than it seems" I started. "There is a lot of fighting, busy days, a- a lot of death in clan life..." Bee looked up at me with mixed expressions. "Think really hard about it before you make such a important decision okay?"

"O-ok Puddlesplash" Bee seemed to be a little more serious before continuing leading us.

"Spoken like a true deputy" Rushfire whispered in my ear.

"I was just giving him a better picture..." I trailed off.

"Actually that is a question I have!" Screechpaw came bounding up to talk with us. "It's kinda obvious when we bring Applestar back that Maplestar will be kicked down from leader, who do you think he'll make as his new deputy?"

"I hope it's Puddlesplash" Rushfire shouldered me encouragement. "He makes a fine deputy!"

"I don't think I would" I mumbled.

"Sure you would! Your such a great mentor and you were a decent deputy! Even under a cat like Maplestar!" Screechpaw chirped.

"Deputy is second in command?" Bee asked from ahead of us.

"Yes, they become leader if the leader dies" I answered.

"What if Puddlesplash made me a temporary apprentice?!" Bee jumped around in excitement.

"Wha-" I started

"That way if I can get a feel of clan life and see if I really want to come join Thunderclan!" Bee looked really overjoyed by his idea.

"Yeah! Than I can have some cat to train with while we are on our quest too! Please Puddlesplash! Please!" Screechpaw begged. I eyed Rushfire awkwardly and he was stifling a laugh.

"It seems like a great idea to me" Rushfire smiled in a jokester manner. I glared at him and looked back at the two young cats. They were pleading at me with round eyes and pouting lips.

"Starclan above..." I groaned, "Fine! But you two better be willing to train and walk. No complaining about being tired!"

"Yes! Yes thank you Puddlesplash!" Screechpaw jumped into the air. Bee also did laughing in excitement.

"Hey now! Calm down!" I asked. The two cats sat down quickly. *What did I get myself into...* "I Puddlesplash, temporarily deputy of Thunderclan, call forth Bee to receive his apprentice name!" Bee took a closer seat in front of me. "Bee, until we find Applestar and you find that it is really in your best interest to fully join Thunderclan your name will be Beepaw!"

"Great! Now-" I cut off Rushfire.

"Not yet Rushfire, I am not done yet" I grinned at him with a mischievous glint in my two different colored eyes. Rushfire looked at me weirdly. I turned back to Beepaw. "Do to the fact I already have an apprentice, Rushfire will be your mentor!" Beepaw looked at Rushfire happily while my mate looked mortified. He could tell I wasn't letting it go so he sat next to Beepaw. "Pass down all you know to him, clan life and our skills both respectfully".

"Mmm..." was all Rushfire said before he bent down to touch noses with Beepaw. Beepaw pulled away a little confused. Screechpaw filled him in quickly.

"Its a thing, you touch noses with your mentor before the ceremony can finish" Beepaw nodded and touched noses with my mate. At that me and Screechpaw started calling out Beepaws new name.

"Beepaw! Beepaw! Beepaw!"

"You do realize I am a bad Thunderclan cat to teach some cat about Thunderclan" Rushfire mumbled. I laughed and licked his check.

"Don't worry mouse brain I'll help you"

"Alrighty! So what do I do first?" Beepaw asked excitedly.

"We continue walking" I laughed.

Chapter 58: Maplestar

I trotted out of leaders den at the small commotion. Looking around I saw Coppernose talking with Dawndrop again. Also outside was Orchidfrost and her kits. Branchtail was playing with them while she was off to the side, surprisingly talking with Mothdust. I looked back at the anxious Coppernose.

Nightrain must be miserable if he is upset... I thought as I dropped down from Highrock. I could feel the glares of my warriors as I walked over to the growing fresh kill pile. With the leaves starting to bud and it warming up a little the prey was flowing better. I grabbed a shrew and was gonna head back to my den when I got a glimpse of Ashenpaw standing were Sparrowscar had placed Plumpaw. She was just staring at the spot as if a Plumpaw was gonna pop right there from out of the ground. I pulled my ears back and turned my attention away from the grieving cat. *I didn't mean for her to die...* As I was about to jump back up and into my den, Cardinalrush stopped me.

"What?" I muttered through the shrew.

"I heard some of the warriors saying that they spotted Brindlepelt looking over the border calling out to Rushfire. Still no sign of Screechpaw however"

"Who cares?" I mumbled. Cardinalrush looked annoyed.

"Who cares? Those two abandoned and ran off from Thunderclan when Pu-" I glared at her which kept her from saying his name. She sighed and backed off. "Sorry to disturb you"

"They left cause Thunderclan is weak and they knew they wouldn't survive" I muttered through the fur of the shrew in my mouth. "What more is there to say?"

"Thunderclan is still strong, we just lost one battle" Cardinalrush huffed.

"If we were we wouldn't have lost any cat" I grumbled. I passed my deputy to, again, attempt to jump up and enter my den, but I was stopped by the pounding of paws. I turned quickly to the entrance thinking we were being attacked. The dawn Windclan border patrol came back sooner then they should have. Suspicious I dropped my shrew and walked over to confront Slatefoot, who looked annoyed but relived to see me. "What's wrong?"

"There is a group of cats waiting at the border," Slatefoot informed, "Snailstar and Birchleaf".

"What do they want?" Cardinalrush asked aggressively.

"They want to talk to you Maplestar tomorrow at high noon. The wish to meet at the end of the creek that marks our border" Slatefoot stated firmly.

"I bet it is an ambush Maplestar, we should prepare for a fight" Cardinalrush advised. I rolled my eyes.

"It isn't, Snailstar doesn't stoop that low Cardinalrush" I hissed.

"How do you know for sure?"

"Cause I know what type of cat he is. He is never one to start the battle but to end it" *what does he want to discuss? I know what I want to discuss...* I looked back at Ashenpaw. The silver she-cat was still sitting and staring at Plumpaw's spot. *I want to discuss the end of this horrible idea of a war... I can't believe I let Briarstar black mail me... Puddlesplash was right...* I walked away, heading to my den, and picking up my abandoned shrew.

"Are you actually gonna go tomorrow?" Cardinalrush asked with no answer.

***

My head was bobbing as I tried to stay awake. I was curled up in my nest waiting for Briarstar to come and discuss plans. *She is gonna hate me after this meeting...* I thought as I looked outside of my den. The dim moonlight filtered in lighting up my cave with silver light. *Meeting at night so Windclan and Shadowclan cats can't see us traveling*

between each other. I wonder how her campaign against Shadowclan went? Briarstar hadn't asked for my help so I guess she is holding up okay against Tinystar...

"They're here" Cardinalrush said as she came and blocked the entrance to the cave. I sat up as Cardinalrush stood aside and Briarstar and Shortlake entered. Cardinalrush left us alone. The young warrior had no care for this.

"Greetings Maplestar" Briarstar said grimly.

"Hi Briarstar" I mumbled. *I just don't want to deal with you right now.*

"I heard your first battle with Snailstar didn't go well, how unfortunate" she stated her dismay. I looked away from her hazel gaze as it reminded to much of my own fathers disappointment look.

"Yes, we lost a valuable apprentice and a warrior" I informed. "It's making me revaluate this situation"

"What? The loss of one battle and two cats?" Briarstar sounded angry. "I lost three warriors in my four fights against Tinystar. You'll get use to losing cats Maplestar"

"It's not just that" I hissed, losing my temper a little at the leader. I sighed and lashed my tail. "Snailstar and I are meeting tomorrow to talk"

"Talk surrender of territory or your cowardness?" At that I lost it.

"Coward?! Did you just call me a coward?!" I growled deeply and loudly. "I am thinking of the safety of my warriors and their futures!"

"Your showing yourself to be as soft as a Kittypet!"

"Briarstar..." Shortlake grumbled. Briarstar shot her brother an annoyed look before looking annoyed at me.

"We stick to this war Maplestar!" She hissed. "You know what happened if you don't" Briarstar spat before leaving briskly.

Shortlake sighed and bowed to me slightly.

"Goodbye Maplestar" Shortlake and her left followed by Cardinalrush. I sat stewing Briarstars words in my head.

Coward?! Soft Kittypet?! I'll show her that fox hearted leader!

"Maplestar?"

"What?!" I snapped at the reappearance of Cardinalrush.

"I wanted to discuss your plans for tomorrow, the plan for your meeting with-"

"Yes! Hopefully Snailstar will accept my apology"

"Is that really good for your imagery?"

"I don't care about that, I don't want to loose any cats"

Chapter 59: Puddlesplash

Rushfire was studying Beepaw's hunting stance, which was better than most beginners. Rushfire came forward a little and pushed Beepaw's butt a little lower.

"You want to keep you belly level with the ground" Rushfire advised and Beepaw nodded in acknowledgment. Screechpaw came pounding through some bushes with a large bird.

"Loomf whaf I caughf!" She cheered through feathers. It was hard to understand her. She dropped it and beamed at me.

"Great job Screechpaw!" I praised.

"Oooo goodie! Breakfast!" Beepaw came running over. Screechpaw quickly stop him.

"Rushfire ask him a question! Quick!"

"Who gets feed first before warriors can eat?"

"Oh! Umm-" Beepaw paniced a little. "Elders, queens, and kits?"

"Yep! Good job!" Rushfire praised Beepaw. Beepaw smiled and quickly started pulling feathers off. I couldn't help but giggle at his eagerness to eat.

"You know, that was almost a deal breaker. Eating is, like, my third favorite thing to do".

"Oh?" Screechpaw eyes him playfully as she helped him pull of feathers from the bird. Rushfire smiled and looked away. From the corner of my eye I could see my mate go wide eyed with amazement and mouthing 'woah'. I was curios so I followed his gaze and spotted what he saw. Over the bushes we were hiding behind, being silhouetted by the rising sun. Was these tall rock formations. Rectangular mostly in shape and glittering like they were made of reflecting water.

"What is that?" I asked Beepaw. Beepaw and Screechpaw both looked up.

"Woah! What weird looking mountains!" Screechpaw gasped. Beepaw laughed a little.

"Heh, heh, maybe I should teach you guys stuff too" I smiled softly. "That's where we are heading!"

"Applestar is in there!? That place looks huge even from here on this hill!" Rushfire said in a worried tone.

"Starclan will show is where he is in there!" Screechpaw said in faith.

I really hope so Screechpaw...

***

By high noon the massive twoleg dens in the distance weren't getting any bigger. Screechpaw was starting to complain again but even more.

"Ugh! This is taking so long!"

"Screechpaw please..." Rushfire moaned. Beepaw was walking alongside his temporary mentor. And I was in the lead. Crossing this short grassed field with the sun beating heat onto our backs was making us uncomfortable and hot.

"Please Screechpaw, we are all hot so could you complain less" Beepaw pleaded. Screechpaw didn't reply to that. As we got closer to a thin tree line I flicked my ear at the occasional rumble and faint shake of the ground coming from beyond it.

"It seems like there is another Thunderpath ahead!" I yelled back as we started to cross through the thin tree line. The smell of the twoleg monsters could be smelled even from here and the loud rumbling was growing louder.

"Puddlesplash it sounds busier than the one by the barns" Rushfire said. He was right. As we crouched in some bushes before the large

dip in the ground and then the Thunderpath we could see that it wasn't any larger than our Thunderpath back by the lake. However a lot more monsters passed by us.

"Will have to be more cautious going over it" I advised.

"Eh, it's just a thunderpath! What's the worse that could happen?" Screechpaw spoke for lack of knowledge.

"You could get killed Screechpaw, that's the worse that could happen" I scolded lightly. I looked back at the path. I remembered something and quickly glanced at Rushfire. "What was the old trick you were telling me about Thunderpaths? The one you said every Skyclan cat is taught?"

"The one about vibrations and sensing monsters coming?" Rushfire asked. I nodded. My mate shrugged. "I really don't think it works but we could try, it would make crossing it easier". Rushfire keeps forward after a monster passed and placed a paw near the dark, smelly black stone. As soon as he did so he looked back in shock. "I think it's working! I can feel a vibration!" As he said that a monster cane into view from down the road.

"That's great Rushfire!" I called to him.

"That means we can cross safety right?" Beepaw asked. I nodded yes to the young cat. Rushfire came back and smiled after the cat passed.

"Ok, I'll cross first. I'll call you guys over to cross when it's safe to okay?"

"Good plan" I agreed

"It seems safer!" Beepaw said in am optimistic manner. Screechpaw just stayed quiet but nodded. Rushfire came back to the Thunderpath and felt for a vibration. He then ran across and arrived on the other side safety. I sighed in relief to the breath I hadn't realized I was nervously holding back. I looked at the two young cats.

"Which one of you wants to cross next?"

"I-I'll go" Beepaw said skittishly. He crept closer to the Thunderpath to wait for Rushfire to tell him to cross. Soon two monsters came by. Beepaw puffed out as the stench of the monsters hit our nose. As soon as Beepaw calmed down another monster came out of no where.

"Not yet Beepaw!" I heard Rushfire yell. Another monster passed.

"Ugh, are we gonna wait here forever?" Screechpaw complained. I didn't really want to scold her right now.

"Cross!" Rushfire bellowed and Beepaw bolted across the Thunderpath and made it safely to the other side. As Screechpaw crawled forward four monsters came rushing by. The road seemed quiet after they passed.

"Not yet Screechpaw!" Rushfire ordered but Screechpaw groaned in response.

"I don't see any!" And Screechpaw began to start slowly crossing. "See?! It's not scary?!" I saw from the corner of my eye a huge monster come barreling down the Thunderpath. Screechpaw saw it and froze.

"Screechpaw run!" I yelled.

"Screechpaw come on! Move!" Beepaw and Rushfire screamed from the other side of the Thunderpath. She was still frozen in fear. Out of instinct I ran out onto the Thunderpath and shoved Screechpaw out of the way. She tumbled to safety and I jumped the rest of the way, coming close to getting crushed by the massive monster. I crashed into the other side and got the wind knocked out of me. Rushfire quickly came to my side as I shakily got up, gasping a little for air.

"Puddlesplash! Puddlesplash are you alright?"

"I'm fine..." I said a little shaken. Beepaw was comforting Screechpaw as she was shaking a little. Rushfire, knowing I was fine, went stomping over to her.

"What were you thinking?! You put yourself in danger you mouse

brain!"

"Rushfire" I said calmly.

"I mean! You could have gotten killed! What am I gonna tell Sagelight if we come back without you!?"

"Rushfire stop, that's enough" I put a tail on my mates shoulder. He clenched his jaw and muttered somethings underneath his breathe.

"I'm sorry... I am so sorry..." Screechpaw whimpered as Beepaw cuddled her.

Chapter 60: Maplestar

"Everyone seemed happy about us leaving to talk to Snailstar" Cardinalrush mumbled.

"That's cause they are hoping we are gonna talk and end this entire ordeal" I mumbled back. It was just me and Cardinalrush. I really didn't think Snailstar would bring more than himself, his deputy, and one or two warriors of his. *I hope I am right about that...*

"You know Briarstar is gonna expect something in return for going against her" my deputy mumbled.

"And they will get what they want" I grumbled, "let's just say with everything heading her way, she will wish she didn't cross me"

"That is if this talk works"

"The talk will work out" I peeked up at the sight of three distant cats. I could easily recognize the limping cat in lead as our good old Snailstar. Snailstar and his group of cats slowed down as they reached their side of the stream.

"Hello Maplestar, I didn't think you would show" Snailstar greeted sourly as he sat down. The other two cats that came with him included his deputy Birchleaf and Heronwing the young warrior.

"Same here Snailstar" I grumbled. "I just want to end this?"

"Same, blood shouldn't have been spilled. But why did you even starts this? "

"Briarstar has... information she is holding over my head"

"That seems like a you issue" Cardinalrush mumbled. I growled at her to shut up. Cardinalrush looked at her paws in embarrassment.

"Maplestar if she was doing that to you I would have come to your defense" Snailstar stated sadly. I was a little surprise to be honest. I

didn't think Snailstar would be that kind to me

"Snailstar thank-"

"Aww... such a happy display" Briarstars cold mew made me jump. Snailstar jumped around along with Birchleaf and Heronwing. "Thank you for telling me about this meeting Maplestar, I think this will work swimmingly" with a flick of her tail a bunch of warriors rounded the corner and attacked. We all prepared for the attack. A fluffy silver Tom tackled me and shoved me right into Carndialrush, then him and another large tom launched themselves at Snailstar. They pinned him and Briarstar pranced over and looked between us and the confused and panicked Windclan pair.

"Briarstar wh-" Birchleaf started but the tortoiseshell leader interrupted her.

"I am taking Snailstar here, if both Windclan and Shadowclan doesn't forfeit territory to us than you may or may not find his body floating in the lake by the next moon. Right Maplestar?" I looked shocked at her, realizing what she was trying to pull.

"I have no paw in this! Don't dra-"

"It was your idea to use this meeting as a way to get Snailstar alone and capture him" she sneered. The look in her hazel eyes sent a shiver panic down my spine.

"What in the world Maplestar?!" Birchleaf hissed, getting ready to try and save Snailstar.

"Attack me, and my warriors will take one of cripples lives right here and now" Briarstar warned in low, gravely tone. Birchleaf growled at that.

"Do you actually think I can convince Tinystar to give territory up for a Windclan cat?"

"Yes, because she knows that an end to this war won't be near if the ransom isn't fulfilled"

Chapter 61: Puddlesplash

"Aaa! Watch out!" Beepaw yelled as he jumped out of the way of twoleg feet. Screechpaw, Rushfire, and I were on the side in what Beepaw called an alley. Beepaw jumped back into the alley way and glared at the twolegs. "They have no sense of awareness". The stone paths Beepaw calls sidewalks were less crowded than they were earlier today, but it was still a lot more twolegs than most of us really dealt with. The sun was slowly going down, lighting up the buildings clear surfaces with glittering, warm orange light of sunset. It was pretty, like sunlight on snow, but it didn't make this place bearable.

"Ugh, did you find any food?" Screechpaw mumbled. Her tummy grumbled as she spoke. Beepaw shook his head.

"Sorry, you could have eaten the housefolk scraps I found earlier but you said it smelled like rotten prey"

"Cause it did!" She lashed her tail.

"Will find something later..." I was getting annoyed. We have been wandering around these twoleg stone dens for a few days now, but no sign of Applestar anywhere. The few cats we tried to talking to didn't know or didn't care where our friend was. I squinted my nose at the foul smell of this place as I tried to look for any familiar scent.

"Puddlesplash we have been at this for days," Rushfire spoke quietly while Beepaw and Screechpaw argued about food, "if we haven't found him yet I don't think will find him at all".

"But we have to keep looking" I grumbled. I was getting more annoyed than I should be. "If we give up then we came here for nothing, we left our sons for nothing!" Rushfire could tell I wasn't gonna let up in this. He sighed and looked around.

"Could we continue in the morning? I don't feel any safer in this

place during the night and I want to actually sleep"

"Sure..." I looked pass Rushfire and at Beepaw and Screechpaw. "Stop bickering you two! We need to find a place to sleep for the night!"

"Could we please find something to eat first?!"

"I did find something for you to eat! But you didn't want it so you can deal with your rumbly tummy!"

"Ugh this is gonna be a long night" Rushfire groaned.

***

I sat outside what Beepaw called a box. The box smelled strongly of something sour and one of the corners was soaked in something sticky and just all around nasty. Screechpaw wand Rushfire were already curled up inside drifting to sleep. Beepaw sat grooming himself inside the box.

"You gonna come in Puddlesplash?" Beepaw whispered.

"No, I am gonna take watch. Make sure nothing bad happens"

"Can I with you?" Beepaw asked as he jumped out of the box gently.

"If you want, I am not gonna stop you" I mumbled. I looked down the alley way with a sad look.

"Are you sad cause we haven't found your warrior friend yet?"

"I guess..." I sat quietly there with Beepaw. I could hear Beepaw shuffling nervously behind me.

"Co-could you tell me more about this Starclan of yours?" I looked back Beepaw surprised a little.

"What do you want to know?"

"D-do all dead cats of the clan go there?"

"No not all of them"

"Who and where do those who don't go to Starclan go than?"

"Well, there is this place called the dark forest where bad cats go"

"B-bad cats? Like cats who eat other cats?"

He is just never gonna let that go! I laughed a little in my head. "I guess they would if there was a cat like that"

"Have you ever seen a Starclan cat or these dark forest cats before?"

"Yeah... a few times actually" *mostly just the disembodied voice, Breezeheat once, and Pineclaw way to many times to count.* I also wanted to say.

"No offense... b-but I don't think they are real..." Beepaw mumbled to the ground. He had looked away embarrassed by his statement. I shrugged.

"That's fine" I said looking back down the alley way.

"Y-Your are not mad about that?!" He sounded surprised. I looked back at him and shrugged again. "Screechpaw got huffy about it when I told her..."

"Is that why you two have been so upset at each other?"

"Yeah... I then thought you and Rushfire would judge me harsher because of Screechpaw's reaction"

"I didn't when I was an apprentice. I was judged by that along with my pelt" I said looking down my back. "I don't really like judging other cats cause I don't want to make them uncomfortable like I was"

"What made you change your beliefs? Why do you believe in Starclan now?"

"Oh..." I looked at my paws a little upset at the memory.

"You-you don't have to tell me if you are uncomfortable about it?! I-I am just curious and stuff?!" Beepaw panicked.

"I-it's fine" I smiled back sweetly. I looked up at the sky with mixed emotions. I could barely see the stars but I could pick a few out against the dark sky as they blinked dimly. "I guess when my mom died I didn't want her to actually be dead... so I started thinking I would always get to see her when I go to Starclan too. I started to force myself to believe in it, convinced myself it existed so I could sleep at night without crying. At some point my beliefs were confirmed and I truly did start to believe in Starclan" It felt bitter sweet to talk about those memories but I was happy to help Beepaw. Beepaw was quite for a few moments.

"... so you aren't mad that I don't?"

"Of course not. Just because you have different beliefs than me doesn't mean I have to hate you because of it" I smiled sweetly at him. Beepaw smiled back.

"I should go get some rest" he mumbled before walking into the box. He laid down and looked at me with confidence and mouthed thank you. I nodded and turned my focus away from the box. I felt proud of myself, feeling better about this whole situation I am in. I looked back down the alley way again with a warm feeling in my chest when I spotted a cat the surprised me. The starry ghost cat of Breezeheat standing at the end. Breezeheat nodded before going around the corner and out of sight. I bounded after the red tabby tom cat. "Puddlesplash?!" Beepaw called out as he mist likely saw me running. I didn't care, I didn't want to loose track of Breezeheat. I turned around the same corner he did and onto the well lit but almost completely empty stone path. Breezeheat was down a little ways turning down another alley. I ran down following him. I spotted him jumping over a fence in the alley and kept following him. I was just barely keeping up with ghost Breezeheat. I followed him cautiously across a few large Thunderpaths down stone paths and up some sort of metal green hollow trunk thing. That made a tink sound when I landed on it. Soon Breezeheat went down another alley way and when I went around the corner, he was gone. Instead, their was a group of cats who hadn't realized I was there. The large group of cats were sharing tongues and discussing things I couldn't hear from where I was. There was a fluffy grey tom with a purple collar, a light red tabby tom with a yellow collar, another

red tabby tom with a blue one, a white and grey she-cat, and a golden tabby she-cat. When my eyes laid upon the last cat my breath was caught. The tom cat had a missing front leg, left eye and a few scars over his body but I recognized that cream tabby pelt any where. I heard running paw steps from where I had come from and heavy panting.

"What in the name of Starclan-" Rushfire huffed as he approached me. Screechpaw and Beepaw were also confused and panting from being out of breath. Rushfire saw I was focused on something and followed my gaze down the alleyway. Be spotted the familiar at too. "Is that-"

"It's Applestar..." I mumbled. One of the cat in the group had spotted us, the red tabby with the yellow collar and called out.

"Hey! What you staring at?!" The rest of the group turned to see us. Applestar eye went wide when he saw us.

"Puddlesplash? Rushfire?"

"Who?" The grey kittypet asked. Applestar ignored them and cane hobbling down as fast as he could on his three legs.

"Guys is that really you?!"

"Applestar!" I cheered as I ran up to meet him. Rushfire did the same. The three of us butted heads and purred I'm a friendly way as we greeted.

"How-wh-why?" Applestar couldn't form his words he was crying.

"Who in the world are these guys Apple?!" one of the she-cats angrily called out. Applestar turned to call out to the strangers.

"These are cats from my clan guys! Come say hi!"

"Wait, so you were actual telling the truth about this clan of yours?" The grey cat said in surprise. Applestar rolled his eye and turned back to me and Rushfire beaming at him.

"How did you guys find me? I thought I was seasons away from the

lake?!"

"Your only a moons journey! And Starclan sent us" I purred. I remembered about Beepaw and Screechpaw and turned around to call them forward. The two young cats were nervously standing a bit ways behind us.

"Come on you two" I said sweetly.

"We should head back soon-" Rushfire started.

"Alrighty hold up!" The light red tabby got between us and Applestar. I was annoyed and confused.

"Who are you guys?!" The golden tabby hissed.

"Guys it's fine" Applestar pleaded as this strangers gathered around him protectively. Rushfire grumbled something incoherent to me but I could tell it was a curse. "This is Puddlesplash and his mate Rushfire?"

"That's freak is a cat? He looks like a two were shoved together" the grey and white she-cat said snidely. I scrunched up in embarrassment of my pelt and looked at my paws. I hadn't done that in seasons, not since I was an apprentice. Rushfire was pretty pissed.

"Don't call my mate a freak" he growled. The grey and white she-cat puffed up at the hostility.

"You don't have to be so grouchy? Geez!"

"Indigo you didn't need to say the things in your head out loud" the dark red tabby calmly approached. "Come on guys calm down, Apple said they were his friends"

"Sorry about them" The grey tom said as he approached us cautiously.

"Come on guys, let us leave Apple to reunite with his friends privately" the dark red tabby said as he pushed some of the cats back a little ways

"But-" the other red tabby started.

"No buts!" The grey Kittypet interrupted. Applestar let out a sigh of relief before peeking up at the sight of our apprentices behind us.

"Who are those two behind you? Is that Screechkit?"

"Screechpaw now!" She said as she proudly got closer, puffing in confidence.

"And who is that? I don't remember you" Applestar said to Beepaw. Beepaw squeaked and hid behind me and Rushfire.

"That's Beepaw, he was a barn cat" I answered. I shook my head and got back on track. "Applestar how did you survive? Why didn't you come back?"

"Well, some twolegs found me when I was unconscious I guess and brought me to this place. The other cats call this place a city" Applestar looked around but got sad and looked at his missing paw. "I wanted to come back, I really did, but I just didn't know how to come home. For Starclan sake I thought I wouldn't survive with a missing paw and eye if I tried to on my own". His eye went wide and he looked at me panicking. "Oh Starclan, Maple-"

"We know" Rushfire grumbled.

"Mapleclaw is terrorizing every cat in the clans right now!" Screechpaw hissed.

"You know she is working with the dark forest?"

"Ye-wait what?" Rushfire scrunched his nose at the statement. I took a step back confused.

"We thought she tried to kill you, what's this about a dark forest cat?"

"A dark forest attacked me and left me to get caught up in the landslide. He said he was helping her..." Applestar looked down at his missing paw. He shook his head and furrowed his eyes brows. "I guess I was supposed to be alone"

"Well I mean- you see we found out she killed Pineclaw, Petalclaw, Foxhop, and Coldheart" Applestar eyes went cloudy with grief at the words I muttered.

"Oh Starclan, Coldhearts dead? And she killed that many cats?"

"Yeah..." I clenched my jaw.

"Wait back to the dark forest cat thing" Rushfire.

"You said that's where bad cats go right Puddlesplash?" Beepaw whispered. I nodded at him.

"I didn't think Dark Forest cats could come into the living though!" Screechpaw growled.

"Truth be told my memory is fuzzy, but I do remember another cat being their and saying he was there to help Mapleclaw and he attacked me. Maybe he was just a loner"

Maybe... thinking back to what Pineclaw told me so many moons ago.

"If you knew she killed so many cats why didn't you just tell every cat?"

"We didn't think any cat would believe us" I sighed, "especially me after I kinda humiliated her at a gathering and then left Thunderclan".

"You did what?" Applestar couldn't help but laugh. "You spoke out... at a gathering?"

"Oh you wouldn't believe how quiet it got when he started yelling" Rushfire purred and I got a little embarrassed.

"We came to bring you back to the clans and make things right!" Screechpaw said cheering.

"A-and to make me a real apprentice.... si-si-since I am only temporarily o-one..." Beepaw stuttered nervously.

"I can't believe you guys found me..." Applestar sounded like he wanted to cry from joy. He peeked up and smiled.

"Let me introduce you to my new city cat friends" Applestar smiles at the Kittypet. "Come on over guys! I want to introduce you to my clanmates!"

"I can't believe what you were badgering on about was actually real" Indigo muttered. Applestar laughed and pointed at Indigo.

"That's Indigo, she is nicer underneath than on the surface"

"I hope so" Rushfire and her exchange glares.

"I am Flicker!" The dark red tabby introduced himself.

"And I am Smaug, sorry about being aggressive earlier" the light red tabby laughed nervously.

"It's okay" I mumbled. I was a little nervous around them.

"I'm Lint and this Lemon!" the fluffy grey cat smiled as he laid his tail on the golden tabby she-cats shoulders. Lemon nodded in greeting.

"I guess you already know my name but I'm Puddlesplash" I smiled really nervously.

"I am Rushfire and this is Beepaw"

"H-hi..."

"And I am Screechpaw!" My apprentice greeted loudly.

"That makes you two apprentices right? I remember Apple saying something along the lines of cats with paws being apprentices" Flicker asked.

"Yep! Puddlesplash is mentoring me!"

"Why did you bring apprentices along?" Applestar asked.

"I didn't leave them a choice!" Screechpaw smiled before I could say

anything. I sighed tiredly and every cat kinda laughed.

"Wait... if they are from this clan you kept talking about..." Lint started mumbling, "are you gonna leave us?"

"I-" Applestar started stumbling with his words. "I am-I'm sorry guys... I am a leader, I have a duty to my clan"

"I'd leave" Lemon shrugged, "The place we all live at really sucks"

"Yeah, way too many cats" Smaug laughed.

"What?" Beepaw cocked his head to the side

"This old housefolk that takes care of us" Indigo mumbled, "she lives in this small place with a huge number of other cats".

"We come out here through a hole in the wall to get away from the noise and the smell" Flicker sighed.

"Sounds like you haven't been living in comfort" Rushfire shouldered Applestar playfully.

"Y-yeah..." he looked back at his missing paw and I felt horrible.

I can't believe Mapleclaw caused that... how could she do that to Applestar? The situation finally began to weigh heavily on me. *There is no way our clanmates are gonna let her stay once we get back with Applestar... just no way they would.* I watched as my clanmates and the Kittypet mingled and started discussing things, with Indigo sulking in the back of the group like soggy wet moss.

"Hey Puddlesplash! Look! A rat!" Scrrechpaw said in surprise as Lint gave her something they had caught earlier. "I have never had rat before! Wonder if it tastes like Mouse?!"

Chapter 62: Sagelight

I was following Coppernose to the nursery, excited to show of his kits to any cat who wanted to see them. I have never seen such a happy father that it was hard to say no to him when he cheerfully asked me if I wanted to see them. I had a very sneaking suspicion though that Nightrain wanted to distract me. *Every cat here is trying to cheer me up. I feel grateful they want to make me happy I don't want to stop being so angry. I just want to tear off Maplestars mouse brained face... especially now she is keeping a leader hostage in camp... ANOTHER CLAN LEADER HOSTAGE WHAT IN THE NAME OF STARCLAN IS SHE THINKING?!?!?*

"I love them so much, they are really cute and adorable! Oh I can't wait to see those two grown up into great warriors, they are just so perfect and..." Coopernose started rambling on about his kits. I followed him into the nursery and spotted Nightrain entertaining Orchidfrost kits with answering their questions.

"How long will they be this tiny?" I heard Elmkit ask.

"For a little while, so that's why you need to be extra careful with them"

"When will be able to play moss ball with them?" Heatkit squealed excitedly.

"When they are a little older Heatkit" Nightrain purred. She spotted me and Coopernose. "Have you come to see our kits Sagelight?"

"Of course!" I said with a happy smile. I looked down into her nest to see two little small fur balls. There was a dark grey tabby tom kit that was so similar to his mother their was no doubt about their relation. And a golden and black speckled she-cat with a fluffy belly. "They are beautiful Nightrain"

"Thank you" Nightrain purred proudly.

"We are gonna be best friends when they are bigger!" Heatkit chirped.

"Yep!" Her brother agreed.

"What are their names?" I asked.

"The she-kit is Emberkit and the tom kit is Spiderkit" Coppernose answered proudly.

"Emberkit look a lot like Pineclaw to me" I laughed a little.

"Yeah, that's what mom said" Coppernose shrugged.

"I am happy for you two" I purred softly. I glanced at Orchidfrosts empty nest and back at her kits bothering Nightrain.

"Where is Orchidfrost?"

"She said she had something important to do" Nightrain shrugged.

"Yeah and Dawndrop is complaining about a belly ache. Said she felt something was just sitting in it" Coppernose sounded worried.

"Oooo! Look it's Mothdust! Hi Mothdust!" Heatkit ran between my legs to greet the grey and brown tabby warrior. Mothdust looked down as Heatkit ran in and out between her front paws.

"Heatkit watch it!" Mothdust warmed as she tried to avoid stepping on the she-cat.

"What is it Mothdust?" Coppernose asked as Mothdust tiptoed around the excited Heatkit.

"I-I wanted to talk to Sagelight, alone if that's okay?"

"Su-sure?" I was a little surprised. "See you around Nightrain, and congrats on your little bundles of joy"

"Thank you Sagelight!" Nightrain called putting as I followed Mothdust out of the nursery. The young cat led me to a secluded part of camp and sat me down.

"What's wrong Mothdust?" I asked concerned.

"I-I just wanted to ask you something I don't know how to ask my mom... and seeing you are friends with Orchidfrost I thought you might know... something..."

"Go on?"

"D-do you know who my dad is?"

"What?" I really didn't think I heard Mothdust correctly.

"Look some Windclan cat came up to me when I was hunting with Ashenpaw near the border. I think his name was Ferretflight... anyway he was trying to have a conversation with me, but with a strained relationship between us and Windclan I shooed Ashenpaw further back into the woods, but I couldn't help but see he looked a lot like me. It was just really weird and I guess I wanted to ask mom..."

"Calm down, calm down" I said soothingly. Mothdust took a few deep breathes and looked at her paws.

"I never had any interest in knowing who my dad was, if he never made his presence known in my life then I didn't want him around either... but when that random cat tried to talk to me I got a weird feeling from him and got me thinking... maybe the reason I never meet him is cause he is in another clan... that I am a half-clan cat..."

"I want to help you, I really do, but I don't know who your father is or was. No cat but your mother does... I am sorry. Did you tell any other cat about this?"

"I told Cardinalrush about it, but she just stormed off into the woods. We haven't been very close... no sisterly love between us anymore..." Mothdust mumbled.

"I want to advice not to tell any one about this suspicion"

"I thought you would say that, Ashenpaw already promised not to talk about Ferretflight trying to talk with me at the border"

"She is a loyal cat like that. Anyway, when your mother gets back I would ask her"

"What if my father is from another clan... I don't know if I really want to know"

"It doesn't matter, you are you no matter who ever your parents are" I smiled softly to cheer her up. She smiled weakly back.

"Thanks Sagelight" Mothdust places a tail on me before wandering off. I smiled after her but couldn't help compare her tabby marking to my memory of Ferretflights.

They do have similar markings... and Cardinalrush is naturally lean... oh don't think like that Sagelight! That isn't right of you to do so!

Chapter 63: Puddlesplash

"... I swear if Indigo complains one more time..." Rushfire grumbled in my ear. I stifle a laugh as I cuddled with my mate a little longer. When we tried to leave the city yesterday Applestars Kittypet friends stopped us and asked to come with, well except for Lint. Smaug, Flicker, Lemon, and Indigo all decided they would rather be in a clan than be in a cramp, smelly den full of many cats. It took a bit to get Smaug and Flickers collars off but after that we were on our way again. Beepaw and Screechpaw have been enjoying telling them even more about clan life, and Beepaw excited to talk about all he had learned from us. It was now early morning and our now larger group were getting up and ready for another long trek back. Off to the side Applestar and Flicker were talking sweetly with each other while Indigo was complaining about how loud Screechpaw is.

"Do you ever shut your trap?"

"Nope! Why do you think my mom named me Screechpaw?"

"She wouldn't stop mewing when she was born" I commented. Screechpaw smiled big at me.

"If you don't want to be here why are you... ugh..." Rushfire really didn't like Indigo and I found it funny. I got up and stretched, pawing Rushfire to get up.

"Come on guys we have a lot of ground to cover" I said.

"Hold up actually Puddlesplash" Applestar said clumsily getting up.

"What is it?" Smaug asked.

"I wanted to ask and really make sure you guys want to join clan life. I know Flicker does," he said as he placed a tail on Flickers shoulders, "but are the rest of you really sure?"

"Of course Apple! I mean I wouldn't be here if I didn't!" Smaug

laughed.

"Yeah, you made it sound like clan life was so close near and such a trusting group when you talked about it" Lemon said sweetly.
Indigo shrugged and said nothing.

"To be honest clan cats aren't all warm welcoming to cats not born in their clan" Rushfire commented.

"And there is a lot of wars and battles. Fighting other cats and the elements... you could die..." I added.

"We all die at some point..." Indigo muttered. Rushfire rolled his eyes. "If it was that bad the clans wouldn't exist in the first place right?"

"True" Applestar agreed. "Would you guys be okay with getting clan names than?"

"I mean... could it be our old names combined with our new names?" Smaug asked, "I like my name..."

"I don't see why not!" Applestar smiled. He looked around and spotted a small rock big enough to stand on. He bounded over and clumsily leaped up onto it.

"What is he doing?" Beepaw asked.

"Is really gonna do a ceremony now?" Rushfire was a little done with this from the tone of his voice.

"You guys will have to be apprentices for a little while till you I can give you your warriors names so..." Applestar smiled mischievously. "Until you have earned your warrior names, you'll be known as Flickerpaw, Lemonpaw, Smaugpaw, and Indigopaw!"

"But we already know how to hunt Apple" Indigopaw complained.

"Yes but you have to learn how to fight AND how to hunt in the forest. Hunting in the city is much different than out here"

"Ugh...."

"It's not that bad" Lemonpaw tried to cheer up Indigopaw.

"And he is called AppleSTAR not Apple" Rushfire said snidely. Indigopaw glared at him and I elbowed him in the side, hard. "Hey..." he glared at me. I gave him the look of 'knock it off'.

"Can me and Beepaw become warriors?" Screechpaw asked all sweetly like it sounded sickly to the ears.

"No" Rushfire and I stayed plainly.

"Aww..."

"We will be warriors soon Screechpaw" Beepaw tried to cheer her up.

"That reminds me" Applestars amber eye landed on me. "Since I definitely don't want Mapleclaw as my deputy, I want to make Puddlesplash mine"

"Wait what?" I said out loud. I meant to say that in my head. "A-Applestar I was already-"

"Yes, Rushfire told me you were Mapleclaws deputy. But that isn't why I am picking you" he smiled softly at me.

"Why are you picking weirdo here to be deputy?" Indigopaw asked bluntly. Rushfire looked ready to claw her ears off.

"Puddlesplash here did what was right even if it would make Mapleclaw, a cat once his friend, upset and maybe even angry at him. Puddlesplash we can have a proper ceremony when we get back but I really do want you to be my deputy"

"I have only known you for a two days and I think that is a great idea" Smaugpaw smiled at me.

"Yeah! He is an amazing mentor!" Screechpaw yelled.

"And he is really caring" Beepaw added.

"And you went all the way out here looking for Applestar"

Flickerpaw smiled at Applestar.

"See, other than Indigopaw every cat here thinks you're a great choice" Rushfire purred.

"Guys please stop..." I wanted to bury myself alive I was so embarrassed. "Fine... again..."

"Yay!" Screechpaw cheered.

"Can we please get moving?" Indigopaw groaned.

"Why do you have so much attitude?!" Rushfire snapped. I laughed a little as Indigopaw shrugged.

Chapter 64: Maplestar

I walked along the Windclan border with a unusually large group of cats. Since yesterday was the deadline for my ransom demands to meet, Briarstar ended up killing Snailstar. Drowned him in the lake two times before he finally went limp and the weak tide drifted his body deep into the lake. Birchleaf was less than upset at that, declaring till she had my head Thunderclan better be wary of our border with them. I am not gonna take her threat lightly. Tinystar has also started pressing harder against Briarstar and, using the beech around the lake, had been attacking my border patrols along Skyclan in small bursts. I can't confirm wether or not this is correlated to the death of Snailstar but because of her and Birchleaf I have doubled the sizes of patrols. Cardinalrush was leading a large patrol along Skyclan while I did one along Windclan. I got stuck with Iceeye...

"Can we please hurry up?! I don't want to be too tired for the walk to the gathering tonight!"

"Please, Iceeye, complain in your head!" Springtail snapped back.

"But-"

"Shut it Iceeye!" Springtail, Silverfeather, Branchtail, and Coppernose yelled at the grey and white tabby tom. I could still hear Iceeye mumbling things but it was at least quieter than his normal complaining. I don't think my warriors thought I was listening in on them so they all started having small talk.

"Hey Springtail, I noticed you and Slatefoot have been getting really close recently" Coppernose implied.

"No we aren't having kits any time soon Coppernose, we are just having a good time with each other that's all" I swear I could hear Springtail roll her eyes.

"You don't have to have kits Springtail," Silverfeather imputed, "me

and Skyleaf were always on the log about having kits".

"I mean, Slatefoot and I both want kits, just we want to wait longer that's all"

"I remember when Sunpelt told me she was expecting kits" Iceeye sweetly said. "I had a literal panic attack cause I really thought she was just eating too much prey".

"Of course you would think that" Branchtail laughed.

"Sunpelt was such a scary queen" Silverfeather nervously laughed.

"Yeah, everything had to be perfect for when our kits came" Iceeye laughed with Silverfeather. "By the way Coppernose, how is Nightrain taking to the queen life so far"

"She loves hanging out with the kits but she really would rather be out hunting and patrolling to be honest"

"Orchidfrost was thinking about becoming a full time queen now that... you know..." Branchtail started.

"You can say Dawndrops name Branchtail" Coppernose said kindly.

"Dawndrop was such a kind and diligent Queen" Iceeye commented. I flicked my ears at what sounded like a cat crashing through the forest. I froze and swiftly turned to in the direction of it. The rest of my patrol Turing in the direction of the loud noise in suspicion. Ashenpaw came jumping out of a bush frantically panting.

"Ma-M-huff-cough-Mapl-" she tried to say through her heavy breath, "Shadowclan attack-huff-Skyclan border patrol-huff-Cardinalrush-every cat is back at camp..."

"We are cutting this patrol short" and ran towards back to camp. Iceeye didn't feel like sighing in relief at something so dire. We rushed through the forest and back into camp. I didn't even poke my head out of the entrance when I heard the wail of anguish. I spotted Fallensnow's body drenched in blood as Silverfeather cried and ran over to her side. Forestfrost was trying to comfort her mother while Fireash sat distantly away, looking mourning-full at

the youngest littermates body. I looked around at the injured border patrol looking for Cardinalrush.

"Where is my deputy?" I asked Mothdust. Mothdust looked up from licking a wound on her shoulder and then at her paws sadly.

"She tried fighting Tinystar on her own... we were too frantic to remember to grab her body". My eyes went wide in shock.

Great... I need to pick another deputy... I thought as I looked around. I noticed Moonwater wasn't around checking the injured. "Where is Moonwater?" I growled. Mothdust glared at me and then rolled her eyes.

"She was out getting Cobwebs so she isn't here. Eaglepaw went to get her. She said that out loud before leaving but it seems you were never listening". I glared back at my former apprentice before turning to Branchtail and Coppernose.

"Go retrieve Cardinalrushs body!" I barked the order.

"Who is gonna be deputy now?" Branchtail asked sincerely. I didn't answer. Branchtail took my coldness to just leave and go get Cardinalrushs body.

Tinystar is gonna pay for this... I threatened in my head.

Chapter 65: Puddlesplash

"I think I want to make our four older apprentices warriors before we make it to the territories" Applestar muttered under his breath as he hobbled next to me. I had slowed myself down so he wouldn't have to push harder to keep up with my normal pace. The rest of the group was ahead as we walked through the mostly flat field. The sun above was slowly starting to dip below the horizon.

"You want to do it now?" I was a little unsure.

"Yeah! I mean, I feel as if our clanmates would be more accepting if they see I recognize them as warriors. Besides they are pretty much have the skills of a warriors and they are taking to our learning our customs well don't you think?"

"You forget that Indigopaw questions everything we say. Rushfire is questioning why she is even here"

"It's Indigopaw" Applestar shrugged. "Do you not think I should?"

I mean he is right, they will have a hard time with our clanmates already...them being cats with warrior names will make it easier for them. I am more surprised he is asking me if he should! I know I am suppose to advice him when it comes to making a decision but I didn't think he was actually gonna take my opinion... am I really that conditioned to just obey a leaders every whim? "I understand where you are coming from, and if that's what you want to do go for it! Just not Beepaw, he is still pretty young and isn't that good at fighting yet"

"Thank you Puddlesplash!" Applestar looked towards the rest of our group. "Guys! Stop for a few moments!"

"Yeah Applestar?" Flickerpaw stopped to look at Applestar and me. The rest of the group stopped too.

"What is it now?" Indigopaw groaned.

"I want to make you guys warriors before we reach the lake" Applestar informed gleefully.

"All of us!?" Screechpaw bounced up. Beepaw looked up really hopefully.

"No!" Rushfire and I said sternly. Screechpaw sighed angrily.

"Ugh... come on!"

"You really want to make us four warriors right now?" Flickerpaw sounded very happy.

"Awesome! I hope we get cool names like Puddlesplash and Rushfire!" Smaugpaw said cheerfully.

"What was your name before you became leader Applestar?" Lemonpaw asked.

"Oh! I was Applebrook" Applestar smiled. "Anyway... Flickerpaw, Indigopaw, Smaugpaw, and Lemonpaw please step forward"

"Wha-" Indigopaw raises an eyebrow.

"You have to go and sit in front of Applestar" Rushfire whispered angrily. Indigopaw rolled her eyes at my mate. I went and sat next to him while the four cats stepped forward and sat in front of Applestar in a line.

"I, Applestar, leader of Thunderclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on these apprentices. They have trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend them to you as a warrior in their turn." Applestar turned to look at Flickerpaw. "Flickerpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"Yes" the dark red tabby said with a sweet smile.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Flickerpaw, from this moment you will be known as Flickerleaf. StarClan honors your heart and spirit, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan!"

"Flickerleaf! Flickerleaf! Flickerleaf!" Rushfire, Screechpaw, and I cheered as Applestar placed his muzzle on his 'close' friend. It took Beepaw a second to catch on before he cheered too.

"Indigopaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do" Indigopaw surprised me with her serious voice when answering. I really thought she would have said something snarky.

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Indigopaw, from this moment you will be known as Indigocloud. StarClan honors your strength and outspoken voice, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan!"

"Indigocloud! Indigocloud! Indigocloud!" We cheered, this time Beepaw remembered and had no delayed cheer. I swear I could see Indigopool stand up straighter after Applestar places his nose on her forehead.

"Smaugpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I sure do!"

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Smaugpaw, from this moment you will be known as Smaugclaw. StarClan honors your enthusiasm and cheerfulness, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan!"

"Smaugclaw! Smaugclaw! Smaugclaw!"

"Lemonpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?"

"I do!"

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name. Lemonpaw, from this moment you will be known as Lemonpelt. StarClan honors your kindness and compassion, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Thunderclan!"

"Lemonpelt! Lemonpelt! Lemonpelt!"

"I present my clan mates with four new warriors!"

"Flickerleaf! Indigocloud! Smaugclaw! Lemonpelt!" Beepaw got confused.

"Wow... Smaugclaw! It sounds so cool!" Smaugclaw smiled big.

"Indigocloud sounds nice" the she-cat has nothing rude to say.

"Thank you Applestar" Lemonpelt bowed a little to our leader.

"Heh! It was nothin!" He said with a smile bigger than Smaugclaws.

***

I stretched as we reached the top of the hill. Night had fallen by now as we looked over the lake so familiar to us. I couldn't help but take a deep breath and take in the familiar scents. Rushfire sighed in relief at the sight of home.

"Wow..." Indigocloud looked at the lake territories in awe. I don't hold it against her, the territories were beautiful. The full silver moon above reflected dim blue light of the surface of the lake. The now dark green tree line and golden grass of the moore shifted in the light breeze making it look like small waves were crashing over the territories

"I have never seen such a large body of water before!" Smaugclaw expressed.

"Yep! Over there is Thunderclan!" Screechpaw pointed with her tail to the dense woodland of our territory.

"And that's the barns! I use to live there!" Beepaw jumped up and down in happiness.

"Hey... Applestar" Rushfire looked concerned, "there is a gathering tonight"

"Isn't that when all the clans meet to discuss stuff?" Flickerleaf

asked.

"Yep..." I looked at Applestar. "Do you wanna crash it?"

"Uh of course!" Applestar said seriously. "I want all the clans to know what murdering fraud Mapleclaw is!"

That...that just hurts... I wanted to flick at those words. I want to believe Mapleclaw is still my friend deep down. *But still... she killed Foxhop... and Coldheart... cats I know and cared for... so why does I still feel like I am clinging onto something that obviously isn't their anymore?*

Chapter 66: Sagelight

Barely any cat at the gathering was conversing with other clans while we waited for the leaders to start. Every cat here was angry at another clan. Skyclan was barely here to begin with, I guess they just didn't want to deal with this. Riverclan showed up in a angry fit and were spatting venomous words at Shadowclan and Windclan. Windclan is having a furry stare down at my clan mates, who just want to disappear. And Shadowclan look ready to fight at any given moment. I did see from the corner of my eye Lynxfur and Mudstripe talking. I bet Patchfur would be over with those two if she wasn't busy being deputy. *Now that I think of it Maplestar hasn't chosen a new deputy yet. She would have to do it now before moonhigh or it could be considered a bad omen. Not like she cares though...* I decided to go talk with Lynxfur and Mudclaw. As I walked over I thought *would they want to talk to me? I am an enemy cat. Maybe I shouldn't-*

"Hey Sagelight!" Lynxfur greeted enthusiastically.

"Huh-oh Umm hi!" I hadn't realized my paws had a you walked me over while I was in thought. Mudstripe looked at his paws guiltily and I couldn't look at him. *Focus on Lynxfur...* "I heard Troutscale had your kits! Congrats!"

"Thank you! Snowrush is so happy to have siblings!"

"Your son with Swanfeather is a warrior?"

"Yep! Became one awhile ago! He was so excited for the gathering but..." Lynxfur looked around with a nervous laugh.

"Sagelight I heard about Plumpaw..." Mudstripe mumbled. I went wide eye with hurt and looked down at my paws. "I am so sorry about... about everything... I-"

"It wasn't your fault Mudstripe, I know it wasn't you"

"Still-"

"No don't keep apologizing!" I put on a fake smile. *It wasn't Mudstripe, I know that, it still just hurts to know his clan mates killed my daughter...* "Flowerbreeze should have had your kits too right Mudstripe?" I asked genuinely.

"Ye-yeah! Two kits; a she-kit and tom"

"How many kits did Troutscale have?"

"Three! A tom and two she-kits!"

"What are their names?" I asked the two fathers.

"Our she-kit we named Hailkit after my father and the tom is named Otterkit" Mudstripe answered solemnly.

"Hey! I named my son after my dad too! Batkit! Then we have Lightkit and Acornkit!"

"They sound beautiful you two!"

"Yeah, I can't wait to spend more time with them in the nursery!" Lynxfur said happily.

"Huh?"

"Lynxfur here is gonna be a den-dad because he supporting Troutscale with her decision to become deputy" Mudstripe smiled proudly at his Shadowclan friend.

"Oh wow! Troutscale is the Shadowclan deputy! What happened to Shrewnose her sister?"

"Accident with... yeah let's just say it was gruesome..." Lynxfur mourned.

"Sorry..."

"Don't be! You were just asking!"

"I can feel our clan mates stare at us" Mudstripe said with an awkward laugh.

"Let them stare I am pissed at Maplestar anyway..." I growled.

"I notice Cardinalrush isn't here, where is she?" Mudstripe asked.

"She died this afternoon" I shrugged. *I have no care for that cat.*

"Who is deputy now?" Lynxfur inquired.

"No clue," I shrugged again, "Maplestar hasn't made one yet"

"That doesn't seem good" Lynxfur added. The three of us went quiet.

"I miss Puddlesplash" Mudstripe stated quietly.

"Most of my clanmates do... he was a good deputy and kept everything running smoothly even if he was nervous about everything"

"He never seemed nervous, it seemed the role fit him right" Lynxfur commented.

"Well I don't think he is coming back" Mudstripe said sadly. "A patrol caught his scent leaving our territory two moons ago. His, Rushfires, and two other cats"

Screechpaw? Could one of those cats be my missing daughter?

"I never could see Puddlesplash doing that, but I could also see Maplestar pushing Puddlesplash away" Lynxfur added.

"Hey look, the leaders are getting ready to start"

"I also miss Tornpelt, but she is stuck at her camp with kits" Lynxfur added quickly.

"The gathering will commence!" Whitestar voice echoed through the clearing. "The prey is running well in Skyclan! Other than that not much to report!" I could hear some small cheers from Skyclan, but the other clans were mostly quiet about the news. I could tell he was uncomfortable by the tense atmosphere any cat could see amount the leaders.

I bet Patchfur is just as uncomfortable amongst the deputy's as Whitestar is among the leaders. Tinystar stood up and began.

"Shadowclan territory has abundance of prey!" She announced. "Troutscale has had her littler of kits with a Lynxfur! And, thanks to her own dedication, has decided to become my deputy after Shrewnose passed on into Starclan!" A few murmurs of surprise cane from the gathered cats. Every cat here knew that Tinystar supported she-cats who wanted to still complete warrior duties while raising kits but no one could see Troutscale pushing herself that hard.

"Troutscale is gonna show the clans how tough she really is" I smiled at Lynxfur.

"She is gonna push herself beyond that" Lynxfur purred.

"That is all!" Tinystar sat down and I don't think I have seen Briarstar stand up so fast.

"The prey in the rivers are overflowing!" She declared. "I-" Briarstar stopped and looked shock. She was staring at something. The other leaders and warriors were confused and turned around to see what she was staring at. I followed her gaze perplexed at what shocked her. I spotted it, or I should say who, shocked her. A very familiar cream tabby pelt moved through the crowd. Behind him followed a brown and silver pelt, a red and ginger tabby, and-

"Screechpaw!" I called out and raced through the crowd. Pushing cats out of the way. "Screechpaw! Oh Starclan you are fine!" I crashed into my fluffy daughter. Screechpaw yelped in surprise as she was snuggled by me.

"Mom! Mom I missed you!" Screechpaw said after getting over the over the initial shock. I looked up to see Puddlesplash, Rushfire, and the cream tabby staring angrily up at the large oak the four leaders stood at. Right at Maplestar.

That-that can't be Applestar? He doesn't have a missing a leg... unless...

"Hi Mapleclaw!" He called up with a sarcastically cheerful mew.

Chapter 67: Puddlesplash

I would normally be burning with embarrassment as all these cats stared at us but I was more focused on Mapleclaw. Her face was contorted into a fit of fury, shock, and fear. *I wish we did this more discretely.*

"Hi Mapleclaw!" Applestar called up to her with a sarcastically cheerful mew. His gaze was mixture of emotions.

"Applestar?" Whitestar sounded confused.

"Maplestar said you died!" Birchleaf called out.

Where is Snailstar? Or is Birchleaf now Birchstar?

"Yeah, I did lose a lot of lives! Lost my leg and eye too! But I am still kicking! Mapleclaw did try her best!" At that comment everyone flew into accusations and questions at Mapleclaw.

"What does he mean you tried your best?"

"Did you know he was still alive?!"

"You tried killing him! Didn't you!?"

"Explain yourself Maple*claw*!?" Briarstar screamed loudly over every cat. I don't know why but the way the Riverclan leaders reaction seemed fake. Mapleclaw was frozen though, her eyes on us three. "Mapleclaw!" She shook her head and composed herself.

"This can't be Applestar? I have my nine-"

"No you don't! I can see it!" Moonwater called out the lie. "That's why you killed Coldheart and threatened my life! We could see it!"

"You killed Coldheart!?" Ravenclaw yowled.

"I did no such thing" Mapleclaw stated coldly. "Moonwater is just

bitter over Plumpaw!"

"This is Applestar! It is the same tabby pelt and amber colored eyes- I mean eye!" Smokefoot stood next to his younger brother.

"Come on now Mapleclaw! Stop embarrassing yourself!" Applestar called up. I couldn't watch her anymore. It hurt to watch the look of pain and anger fill her hazel eyes. I looked down at my paws and pinned my ear back at the yowling, angry cats.

"Where were you Applestar?" Tinystar asked.

"I was found by twolegs and taken to a place very far away. A twoleg place filled with stone dens and an even worse smell than rotten fresh kill. I didn't know where I was so I couldn't find my way home" I could see his paws shift from the corner of my vision, "Puddlesplash here was given the quest and guidance to find me by Starclan!" I could feel more eyes on me and I just didn't want to be here. "I am here, with my new deputy Puddlesplash, to take back my leadership of Thunderclan! Mapleclaw here is a murderer and has no claim for leader!"

I just want this to be over... please... this hurts too much.

"Mapleclaw did you know?" Birchleaf or Birchstar growled. She didn't answer.

"I truly believe you were dead-" Mapleclaw was caught off by Applestar.

"That's cause you had a cat slash my throat open and left me to get swallowed up by the landslide. You wanted me dead for leadership!"

"Don't forget all that other cats she has killed! Starclan is full of your victims Mapleclaw!" Rushfire hissed loudly.

I don't want to be here... I don't want to see this...

"What? Who else has she killed?!"

"And she killed Pineclaw and Petalclaw!" Rushfire answered.

"You killed Foxhop didn't you?! I knew it!" Sagelight yowled in riotous fury.

"Mapleclaw just leave..." Applestar advised. I looked up at her with begging eyes.

Please... please just leave before they demand your head Mapleclaw...

She seemed to understand her circumstances and jumped down. She began to swiftly move towards the the tree bridge. She passed me and I couldn't help but speak up. As I hung my head.

"I'm sorry Mapleclaw," I whispered, "I am so sorry but you killed cats...". Out of the corner of my eye I saw her whip around in a seething rage and bared her teeth.

"I don't need your pity traitor!"

"Maple-" she leaped at me, her claws outreached I barely reacted, knowing I wouldn't be able to defend myself in time as I tried to turn. Other cats reacting to intercept her but no cat would make it before her claws would dig into me.

I'm gonna die! I am gonna die! A cat of reddish brown fur collided with me and shoved me out of the way, getting the full brunt of Mapleclaws attack. Blood sprayed itself all over my body as I hit and stayed on the ground in shock. Cats of every clan attacked Mapleclaw as she shredded the familiar pelt. "Sparrowscar!" I yowled in agony as I leaped to my paws. Mapleclaw fell to the ground fighting hissing and clawing at every cat tearing her apart. Sparrowscars already still body flooded the area with a pool of crimson. I could feel blood from Mapleclaw splatter and mix in with my fur and Sparrowscars blood as she tried to fight off her attackers. I am overwhelming sense of anguish and fear. Uncontrollably I crouched to the ground and conceded my ears with my paws, pressing myself into Sparrowscars fur trying to calm down from the yowls of pain and anger from both the clan cats fighting and Mapleclaw. I shivered as I pressed myself harder into Sparrowscars fur. His blood pooling and drenching my belly and back paws.

Stop! Stop! Please! I don't want this! Stop! Stop! Stop! I kept repeating in my head. Maybe my mind just kept repeating the noises over and over again, but the fighting cats stopped as Mapleclaws body fell to the ground limp. I felt I could still hear the fighting though and just kept having my anxiety attack. I could smell Rushfire come over and crouch next to me.

"Puddlesplash your fine. Everything is fine, Mapleclaw is dead"

"No... no... stop..." I muttered. I repeated saying no and stop in a hush tone.

"Is he alright?" I heard Mudstripe ask.

"I don't know" Rushfire answered.

"No... just stop... please..."

"Give him some space everyone" I heard Applestar mumble as I could hear cats gather around me. Applestars scent got strong as I a cat place a paw on my shoulders. "Rushfire, when Puddlesplash calms down can you help him get back to camp. He is having a panic attack I think"

"Of course Applestar"

"And try and move him away from the blood, it would help"

"I'll try and clean him up too" Rushfire added. I didn't really care what they were talking about, I just wanted the fighting in my head to stop.

Chapter 68: Puddlesplash

"I am not going on patrol with Indigocloud" Darkcloud complained. "I can't handle that much attitude for dawn patrol, I would rather take Iceeye than her".

"Aww! And I was really looking forward to going on a patrol with you, the cat with a stick up it's-"

"Guys please..." I said with a tired sullen voice. I turned to Darkcloud first. "I'll have Slatefoot switch over to dawn patrol and Indigocloud here can go on dusk patrol to replace him"

"Thank you deputy" Darkcloud bowed before walking off. Indigocloud glared at him before looking back at me with a guilty look.

"Sorry Puddle" she said sheepishly. "I just really like annoying him"

"Could you do less of it" I mumbled with a blank, numb expression. She nodded and walked off. *I just wanna be in my nest... I don't want to deal with this...* Applestar was sharing tongues with Flickerleaf, looking to be having an intense but endearing conversation. I didn't watch for long before I looked around elsewhere.

"Hey Puddlesplash?" Eaglepaw came up to me nervously. I perked up and smiled gently.

"What's up?"

"Could you ask Applestar who my new mentor is? I feel like I am falling behind with the other mentors passing me around. I don't wanna be much of a bother-"

"It's fine Eaglepaw, I'll go ask him" I smiled. My reddish brown tabby son smiled kindly at me. I walked over across the clearing. When I got close enough I stopped and cleared my voice. Applestar looked up quickly and actually looked happy to see me.

"Puddlesplash! Hi! How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine just... just empty I guess..."

"I had something to discuss with you actually if you are up for it" Applestar sat up. Flickerleaf sat up as well and licked Applestars check.

"Will talk later, you two boys have fun" he purred before leaving.

"I had something to discuss with you as well" I stated.

"Lets go to my den" Applestar said calmly. I followed up and into his den. I blinked as we entered, adjusting my eyes to the dark of the cave. "What do you want to talk about?"

"Eaglepaw actually, he needs an official new mentor"

"Oh yes! I heard from Slatefoot that he didn't have a great time with Cardinalrush. I think I'll have Whiteleaf finish his training" Applestar said with a stretch. I felt my spirit lift at that news. I remembered what he said earlier.

"You said you had something to talk to me about"

"Yeah" he looked around a little awkward. "Sigh... okay look... this is hard to ask of you but-"

"But what?"

"I am scared you are gonna say no"

"You won't know till you ask" I felt a little worried. *What does he want?*

"I-I plan on stepping down from leader"

"What?"

"Look, I feel completely responsible for Mapleclaw and everything she caused. I was warned of her possible actions of killing Foxhop, I could see she had anger issues, yet-"

"Applestar don't blame yourself for that, I trusted her too"

"Puddlesplash I don't want to be leader anymore, the guilt is getting to me and...sigh... and I am not the cat that I was when I became leader" he said gesturing to his missing foot and eye. "I am not fit for this"

"Applestar please, Snailstar made it work with a lame leg" I pointed out, "You can do it".

"Puddlesplash you can't change my mind" he laughed a little, "Flickerleaf warned me you wouldn't like this".

"Applestar please don't step down" I beg.

"There is more to this"

"What do you mean?"

"I know the other clan leaders are gonna ask for retribution, they are gonna blame us for Mapleclaw. Just how they asked Flamefall to step down after the Yellowstar wars". I pinned my ears back at that horrible logic of that.

He is doing it for the safety of the clan...

"But if I am stepping down-"

"You want me, your deputy, to take up leadership of Thunderclan" I interrupted him. I looked up at him with a knowing tired look. "Why me?"

"Why not?" He smiled confidently. "A cat who looks beyond our borders. You are the most caring cat that who knows how to keep our clan safe but respected. Don't think any cat here didn't tell me how much you did for them while Mapleclaw leaded. Who else but a cat who cares for every cat"

"I have had no interest in leading" I mumbled.

"Yet here you are as deputy... twice!"

"Cause I had to support those who I cared about, I had to be there for you"

"And I bet that was the same reasoning that made you accept Mapleclaws offer". I rolled my eyes and laughed nervously.

"How do you know me so well?"

"Cause I trained Mapleclaw alongside you, I was basically your other mentor along with Skyleaf". I watched his face as this overwhelming look of confidence and fatherly love looked back at me.

Am I really a leader? I have panic attacks and I get really nervous. Yeah I am less nervous cause I worked on it when I was younger but still I have relapses and reactions. But this... this an offer of a lifetime... I have cats to honor with this decision.

"If you need to time-"

"I accept" I said as calmly as I could.

"Really?"

"Yes, I am your first choice which I am more grateful about than accepting. But this is something I just can't turn down, I would be stupid to"

"I am glad you are, I'll tell every cat tomorrow or right now if you want?"

"How about today, don't want to put a damper on Eaglepaws new mentor ceremony"

Chapter 69: Sagelight

Applestar dropped some news, and very big news it is.

"I am sorry to tell you all, but I plan to step down as leader of Thunderclan!" He bellowed our sadly.

"What?" Whiteleaf asked.

"Why?" Smokefoot asked earnestly.

"You just can't step down Applestar!" Coppernose yelled.

"Give me a second to explain" Applestar smiled awkwardly. "To be completely honest I don't feel as if I am fit to be Thunderclans leader! And I am doing this for our clans safety! Tinystar thinks it was my fault for Mapleclaw and she is right! It was my fault and I can't help the guilt in my heart!"

"Don't step down!" Springtail protested.

"It wasn't your fault!" Silverfeather added.

"I am not changing my mind about this!" Applestar advised.

"If your stepping down, does this mean Puddlesplash will be stepping up as leader?" Branchtail asked.

"Yes! I asked him if he felt he was ready for it and he is willing to be your leader"

"Good!" Ravenclaw cheered. "Puddlesplash has got to be the best choice!"

"When will you be traveling to the moonpool to have your lives taken away?" Moonwater asked.

"I plan on doing it the day after tomorrow! However tonight Flickerleaf and I are going to the moonpool to receive kits!"

"Congrats you two!" Orchidfrost said cheerfully.

"Are you sure you want to step down from leadership Applestar?" Smokefoot asked. I could see Applestar smile contently.

"I am completely sure. And I am handing leadership to no better cat but Puddlesplash"

"If that is what you want than we support you Applestar" I said loudly. *It is his choice...*

"Thank you all! This concludes this meeting!"

"I can't believe Applestar is going to step down" Eaglepaw said with surprise.

"Guys my mentor is gonna be leader!" Screechpaw bounced up in the air.

"Who do you think Puddlesplash will choose as deputy?"

"If only I was a warrior now... Puddlesplash could choose me" Screechpaw complained.

"You would still need to mentor an apprentice Screechpaw" I reminded cheerfully.

"Oh yeah..." she looked up at the sky with a sad look.

"I bet Puddlesplash will chose his mate Rushfire" Eaglepaw pipped up.

"You think?" Beepaw perked up.

"Of course he would! Puddlesplash and Rushfire work well together!" Screechpaw actually made a good point.

"What if he picked your mom?" Beepaw looked up at me. I couldn't help but laugh.

"Sorry but no, I haven't trained an apprentice yet"

"What?! That can't be true!" Beepaw sounded really upset. "You're

so nice and stuff!"

"The timing was never right" I shrugged. *Maybe I should ask for an apprentice. Foxhop enjoyed training Petalclaw.*

"Who else would be a great deputy that Puddlesplash would choose?" Eaglepaw asked our little group.

"What about Darkcloud? Or Smokefoot?" Beepaw named.

"Smokefoot doesn't want to lead, at least that is what my father said that when he was asked by Wishstar once"

"And Darkcloud?" Beepaw asked.

"I really wouldn't want him as deputy..." Screechpaw humfed.

"Why not? Is it cause he always tells you to stop being so loud?" Eaglepaw teased.

"Yeah! He is no fun!"

"What do you mean I am no fun?" Darkcloud grumbled behind them. The three apprentices jumped at his sudden mew and turned around.

"Yo-you heard me wrong Darkcloud!" Screechpaw lied. "I-I said-"

"Don't you guys have duties?" Darkcloud interrupted. The three apprentices nodded before running off to only Starclan knows where. I burst out laughing as Darkcloud chuckled.

"You do have a reputation with the apprentices Darkcloud" I said through my giggles.

"Heh yeah, I am like our generations Ravenclaw"

"I heard that Darkcloud!" Ravenclaw yelled from the other side of the clearing. The two of us couldn't help but laugh even harder. We calmed down and I could hear a question pop up in my head.

"Do you hope Puddlesplash will chose you as deputy?"

"I would enjoy being deputy, but I highly doubt he would choose me" Darkcloud shrugged. "If you remember I bullied him when we were young"

"We are still young!" I protested.

"With the amount of apprentices I have trained I don't feel young" I laughed a little at that comment. "I am surprised you haven't trained one yet"

"Maybe I should ask if I could train Elmkit or Heatkit when they get older"

"Or from the looks of it Applestar and Flickerleaf's kits". The two of us went quiet as we watched the clearing. It was relaxing watching our clans day to day activities. It was awhile before either of us spoke. "I wish Luckwish was still here" Darkcloud muttered sadly. I felt his pain on a personal level as I remembered Foxhop.

"I know how you feel" I sighed, "Eaglepaw and Screechpaw remind me so much of Foxhop".

"Blizzardskip asks me all the time what Luckywish was like... I can never answer him" Darkcloud chuckled with heartache, "I don't even remember his scent anymore".

"I can't even remember what their voices sounded like, I just have Eaglepaws voice coming out of Foxhops mouth when I try to remember..."

"Do you think they're waiting for us? Waiting in Starclan?" Darkcloud looked up. I looked up too at the crystal blue sky. Fluffy white clouds were lazily rolling by.

"I bet they are" I smiled softly. "I bet they are watching us right now, us and our kits keeping their memories alive as well as we can".

"I bet they are both surprised that Puddlesplash is gonna become leader"

"No cat could imagine him becoming leader back in the day" I

laughed. "Puddlesplash was such a nervous reck. He used to constantly apologize for every little thing"

"And Luckywish would apologize with him cause he didn't really pay attention!" Darkcloud smiled.

"Remember when Foxhop started smacking Puddlesplash upside the head every time he said sorry for no apparent reason?" I laughed

"Puddlesplash got so annoyed" we both started laughing. Darkcloud smiled distantly past me. "we really should talk more Sagelight"

"Yeah, we should" I said with a stretch. *Everything seems so much calmer now with no Mapleclaw. It's nice...*

Chapter 70: Puddlesplash

I shifted in my nest as I slowly opened my eyes. Dawn light filtered into the den through the entrance, making it easier to see. I stood up and stretched my front legs, arching my back with an added yawn. *Better go tell the gaurd duty cars they can rest up now that night is over.* I mumbled as I walked out. I poked my head out to see Forestfrost already entering camp, her eyes blinking rapidly as she was barely able to stay awake. Her eyes drooling and her head lumpily leaning forward. I smiled and walked over to my tired old apprentice.

"How was the night?"

"It-yawn-it was fine" she stated.

"Good, go sleep now"

"Ok..." she smiled tiredly before dragging her paws to the warriors den. As Forestfrost entered, she passed Slatefoot leaving.

"Opps, sorry Forestfrost" Slatefoot smiled as the tired cat entered.

"What are you doing up so early?" I asked.

"I thought I could go find some feathers for Springtail as a surprise" I smiled in blushes embarrassment.

"That's sweet of you"

"I just wanna show her how much I appreciate her"

"Well, good luck"

"Thanks Puddlesplash!" Slatefoot left out of camp in search of bird feathers. I looked around and saw dawn patrol slowly getting together. It should consist of Silverfeather, Lemonpelt, Mothdust, and Ashenpaw. But I guess since the mentor and apprentice weren't with the other two that Mothdust went to wake up Ashenpaw. I

looked around seeing if I can figure out what to do while I wait for other cats to wake up and set up the other patrols.

I wanna get as much done before tonight... don't want to leave a mess for my deputy... I thought. *What's that?* I squinted at something moving at the one side of camp. A very small fluffy thing. I smiled in knowing and walked up to the little bundle trying to find a weakness in the wall to escape. The kit was Emberkit, one of Nightrain and Coppernoses kits. She hadn't realized I had walked up to her as she studied the wall closely.

"Aww mousedung there isn't any where through here..." Emberkit sighed as she looked at the camp wall.

"What's wrong Emberkit?" I said. Emberkit jumped up and yelped in surprise as she realized she was caught. She looked around and up at me with a quick grin.

"I-I was looking for the moss ball I hid here to keep Heatkit from ruining it" she lied on the spot.

"Oh? But I thought I heard something about getting through the wall"

"We-well you see-Umm- I was checking the wall to make sure nothing could get through!"

"Emberkit" I gave her a knowing look.

"Fine, I was trying to leave camp but please don't tell mom!?" the tortoiseshell begged.

"Ah, well don't worry I won't tell Nightrain but only if you don't try again"

"That's fair..." she mumbled, looking defeated.

"Why do you want to leave camp Emberkit? You know it's safer here"

"I know that, but Heatkit called me mouse hearted and I wanted to prove to her that I wasn't!" Emberkit scowled. "She says she already

went and saw the forest!"

"I don't think she has Em-"

"Emberkit! There you are!" Coppernose came running up to us with a worried look. "You scared your mother when she woke up and you weren't in the nest"

"I-I-"

"Sorry Coppernose, I was helping Emberkit here look for her missing moss ball" I lied quickly. "She hid it somewhere but she can't seem to find it"

"Hehe yeah!" Emberkit realized what I was doing.

"Oh, I am sorry you lost your moss ball Emberkit. How about I help you make a new one?" Coppernose smiled sweetly at his daughter.

"Yeah! Let's make it really big so I can rub it in Heatkit face!" She squealed as she ran in and out of her fathers legs.

"Let's go wake up Spiderkit so he can help too"

"Yay!" She cheered as she raced off to the nursery. Coopernose watched with a warmth in his eyes. He turned to me with a grateful grin.

"Thank you Puddlesplash for trying to help her"

"No problem!" I smiled back.

"How are you by the way? Are you nervous about tonight?"

"I am a little I think" I shrugged.

"Is Applest- I mean Applebrook back yet?"

"Oh most likely, is he not in the nursery with Flickerleaf?"

"I think he was earlier before dawn but he wasn't there when I woke up"

"I should go see their kits" I said putting a mental reminder in my head to do so.

"They are very pretty kits" Coppernose said.

"Dad! Emberkit says we are gonna make the biggest mossball ever!" Spiderkit said as he ran up to us, Emberkit right behind him by a tail length.

"Yeah! But keep your voice down it is still very early in the morning you two"

"Ok" Spiderkit and Emberkit whispered in a playful way. The two snickered as they looked up at Coppernose with excited round eyes.

"I'll go and get you guys some extra moss" I laughed leaving the father with his kits.

"Thanks Puddlesplash!" Emberkit smiled.

Chapter 71: Sagelight

I snipped at the end of a stalk blooming with small pink flowers. I carefully picked it up and placed it in the small, growing pile of herbs.

"Thanks again for helping me gather herbs Sagelight" Moonwater chirped.

"No problem Moonwater! What is this anyway?"

"Milkweed! With Nightrain having trouble nourishing and most likely more queens and kits coming I decided to stock up" the dark grey tabby said as she went back to collecting lavender.

"I don't remember you ever giving me milkweed"

"You never had any trouble with nursing" Moonwater laughed.

"I am surprised you are up right now, after traveling to the moonpool with Applebrook last night"

"I am a little tired but I still have duties to preform". We went back to collecting these sweet smelling herbs for awhile before I spoke again.

"Is this enough Moonwater?"

"Yep! I am actually done collecting lavender"

"This was much better than doing patrol, a lot more relaxing"

"Yeah, this is definitely my favorite chore" Moonwater smiled before picking up her lavender. I picked up the milkweed I collected and followed the medicine cat back to camp. We soon reached camp and went through the camp tunnel. On the other side I spotted two of the kits, Spiderkit and Heatkit, near the camp wall. Heatkit was trying to get Spiderkit to go into the camp wall.

"Heatkit watch it!" Spiderkit protested.

"Oh stop being such a mouse heart and go!" Heatkit urged.

"Oh Starclan..." Moonwater groaned.

"Heatkit we can just make a new moss ball!" Spiderkit protested.

"But Emberkit won't let me play with the big one you and her made and there isn't any moss left over to make a new one!"

"Ask Puddlesplash maybe he can go get more!" Spiderkit protested more. I laughed as I continued to follow Moonwater to the medicine cat den. I trailed behind her into her den and dropped the milkweed near where she had dropped her lavender. A thought had been bugging me as I watched Moonwater store her herbs.

"Moonwater?"

"Yeah?" She turned to face me.

"Do any of the kits now have potential to be a medicine cat?" *She hasn't talked about having an apprentice since Plumpaw...* Moonwaters eyes filled with pain before she looked down at her herbs.

"No... none of them really have the same enthusiasm or connection that really is needed"

"Oh..."

"But I am sure one will come along at some point!" She said perking up. I could tell there was pain in her voice but I couldn't see her face as she faced the wall putting her herbs away. I watched her for a few seconds with a worried expression before sighing.

"Do you need anymore help Moonwater?"

"No, no I don't think I do. You can go if you want"

"And leave you in here by yourself" I smiled at her turned back, "I don't think so! Every cat needs company!" It was silent for a few moments, with Moonwater stopping what she was doing. After a

few moments of silence the medicine cat turned her head back at me with a saddened look.

"If you want could you help me look for any bad herbs left in my stores? I have been putting off cleaning them out"

"Of course Moonwater"

***

I walked out of the medicine cat den and stretched out on the evening light. Moonwater followed behind me and blinked at the the sun.

"Ugh... Herb sorting is my least favorite thing to do" she grumbled.

"You hungry? I could see what's in the fresh kill pile"

"Yeah please! I am starving" Moonwater smiled. I walked over to the fresh kill pile and picked out a chunky shrew.

Yummy! I walked over to Moonwater where she had already started laying out in the sun. I dropped it and payed across from her.

"Sapkit! Watch this!" I peeked my ears to a tom calling out to his littermate. I looked over to see Flashkit, a red speckled tom-kit, leap up in the air and land on a leaf.

"Any cat could do that Flashkit" a grey and white she-cat, Eveningkit, mumble.

"No! It is really cool!" Flashkit argued.

"Eveningkit is right Flashkit" Sapkit said with a small yawn.

"Alright than! You guys do it than!"

"That's Flickerleaf and Applebrooks kits right?" Moonwater asked.

"Yeah, Sapkit looks a lot like Applebrook" I giggled as Sapkit leaped onto the leaf from where he was.

"Except for those ridicules long legs" Moonwater commented. I

laughed as I noticed his long legs too.

"All warriors old enough to catch their own prey, join under highrock!" I was a little surprised to hear Puddlesplash call the clan meeting, but realized he was now leader and would be going to the moonpool tonight to receive his nine lives. "I am calling this meeting to select my choice in deputy!"

"I wonder who he is gonna pick?" Ashenpaw mumbled more to herself I guess. She was close by enough for me to hear.

"I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Thunderclan is Darkcloud!" Puddlesplash choice shocked our clan mates as they murmured so.

"I thought Darkcloud bullied Puddlesplash as apprentices" Whiteleaf whispered.

"Maybe that's all in the past" Smokefoot suggested. Darkcloud came forward and bowed to Puddlesplash.

"Thank you Puddlesplash, I promise to be as I can be to honor your choice in me"

"Darkcloud! Darkcloud! Darkcloud!" Every cat called out loudly.

"Yay dad!" Jaggedtail cheered.

"Yeah! Go dad!" Blizzardskip added.

"You must be proud of your brother" I said looking at Moonwater. She glowed with love at her brother.

"Yeah, but this means dad is not gonna get a single complaint in about patrols with Darkcloud as deputy" Moonwater laughed.

"Iceeye is still gonna continue to complain no matter who is deputy" we both laughed. Moonwater got up as she continued to laughs.

"I am gonna go congratulate Darkcloud. You can have the rest of the shrew" Moonwater smiled as she pushed the shrew towards me.

"You sure?"

"Yeah! See you later Sagelight!" She trotted off to her littermate.

Chapter 72: Puddlesplash

"We are to not speak of this ceremony to any cat Puddlesplash, and do not speak to me during it" Moonwater advised. She gave me a smile of confidence as I followed her up the rocky path to the moonpool. I could feel the butterfly pit in my stomach build as we got closer to the moonpool. Each step sent a nervous thought my mind, just like when Rushfire and I went here to receive kits.

What if I am not allowed to accept my nine lives? What if there is some sort of test to prove so? We went over a few more boulders before the two of us were looking down at the moonpool. I went wide eye at the beauty of this place. It was still as gorgeous as when I was here the last time. The clear, gentle pool reflected the night sky above perfectly, with the almost full moon lighting the stone in a dappled silver light. I don't know why, but the air almost smells lighter here, calmer even. I jumped down and stood next to Moonwater. She smiled once again at me with confidence and I smiled back sheepishly. We both laid down next to the pool edge and I looked down at my clear reflection. I could see every detail of my half face, and my nervous two different colored eyes. I took a deep breath and let it out. I than placed my nose on the cold surface of the moonpool and closed my eyes. I could feel myself being pulled gently and I froze. I relaxed as I could feel the warmth of a place I had been once before. I opened my eyes slowly to see I the faint, starry territory of Starclan around me. I looked around admiring the beauty whe I flicked my ears at the sound of approaching cats. I looked in the direction to see a group of cats approaching me. The conflicted emotions of joy and grief hit me like a barrage of rocks as I quickly recognized many of them. Wishstar was in the lead, giving me that thoughtful look she did when I was a kit a long time ago.

"Hello Puddlesplash, I was wondering when I would see you here" Wishstar mewed. The rest of the cats gathered around me with so much love in their eyes I wanted to cry and snuggle with all of them.

"H-hi every cat" I choked. The first cat to approach me was a silver spotted she-cat with bright green eyes. I wanted to purr but I just choking up as I recognized my mom the minute she came forward. Spottedsnow purred as she looked at me with so much love and kindness I felt like I was gonna melt.

"Oh Puddlesplash, you surpassed everything I dreamed you would be" Spottedsnow purred loudly.

"I-I missed you mom..." I mumbled, trying not to cut off the sentence with a painful choke of tears. She smiled as her purr got stronger. She placed her nose on my forehead.

"With this life, I give you the gift of cherishing. Cherish every moment of everyday as if it is your last. Cherish the cats you have known, those in your life now, and those to come. Remember every memory and carry it with you to push you harder on your darkest days, not only for you but for the cats you will lead" Spottedsnow said. A strong painful warmth flooded into me and almost gasped at the sudden feeling. Spottedsnow stepped back and the feeling fleeted away as quickly as it came. The next cat to approach was the ghostly rich brown apprentice Plumpaw. I smiled softly at the young cat as she looked up at me with a sweet grin.

"Hi Puddlesplash!" She said with excitement. She didn't seem like her shy self, the young apprentice seemed more confident than last I remember her.

"Hi Plumpaw" I said kindly.

"I hope you train Screechpaw well, and I wanna thank you for helping me through such a rough time in my life" her blue eyes shimmered with a little sorrow before she bounced back to being joyous. I bent down a little as she pressed her nose to my forehead like Spottedsnow previously did. "With this life, I give you the life mentorship. Not only advise and help your own apprentice learn and grow but those who are troubled or struggling, no matter the clan or cat" Plumpaw mewed. Another bolt of pain shot through me, though this felt colder than the life Spottedsnow gave me. I shook a little as Plumpaw took a few steps back and smiled again. "I hope you continue to take on apprentices as you lead your clan".

Plumpaw left and by the time the next cat came forward the pain of her life left me. I shivered a little bit before looking up and saw who the next cat was. I was greeted by the sight of Breezeheat, who took my by surprise. Last I saw him he was just a silent ghost cat leading me to Applebrook.

"I want to first say I am sorry" he quickly said before I could get a word in. "I treated you like a disease, a monster rather than a cat when I was alive and I have no excuse but my own fear of your fur". I recognized the voice, this was the voice of the cat in my dreams. The one I never saw.

"You-you were the other cat! The disembodied voice in my dreams!" *That's why I recognized the voice!*

"Yes, I wanted to atone for my behavior towards you. But instead I caused you more pain by visiting you using your ability" he sighed. I studied Mapleclaws father for a second.

He is blaming himself for Mapleclaw too... "I forgive you Breezeheat, and please don't dwell on Mapleclaw. Her choices were her own, even if we wish we could help her change them" I gave him a saddened smile. He looked at me bewildered before it melted into sad gratitude. The red tabby pressed his nose on my forehead and I prepared myself for the life.

"With this life, I give you the gift of judgement. Not for judging of who a cat is but of their actions and choices and for the reason, may it be you passing judgment on your clanmates or those outside of Thunderclan" Breezeheat stated. Another bolt of pain, even colder than the ones before. I shivered from the freezing pain as it went through my body. Breezeheat stepped away and warmth filled my body, taking away the coldness of his life. I took a deep, calming breath and watched as the next Starclan cat came forward to give me my next life. I could feel my entire body become bubbly with joy as I looked down at Luckywish, the smallest of my littermates.

"Hi big brother!" Luckywish mewed as he smiled a big toothy grin at me. I smiled back at the innocent silver tom. The familiar feeling of grief hit me but I shoved it deep down.

"It feels like I haven't seen you in forever Luckywish"

"Well, I mean I watch over you everyday so it doesn't feel like that for me" he said playfully. I bent down like I did for Plumpaw so he could give me his life. Luckywish placed his nose on my forehead and spoke with his overjoyed voice.

"With this life, I give you the gift of protection. Not ever cat can defend themselves and not every cat knows they need it. Keep your clanmates and family safe no matter the cost". Luckywish's gift flooded over me in a heavy, burning pain. It made it hard to stand as the pain faded. The heavy weight stayed for awhile longer. "Good luck brother!" Luckywish chirped before leaving to stand amongst the other cats again. The next cat to come forward was Skyleaf. I could feel relief flood over me seeing my old mentor. Skyleaf was one of the few cats who built up my confidence, and seeing him here reassured me.

"Look at this! My apprentice is becoming a leader" he purred with pride.

"No thanks to your teaching" I joked

"You had it in you, I just showed you what was there" the white and brown tom beamed at me. He placed his nose, just like the others, on my grey and brown forehead. "With this life, I give you the gift of self-assurance. Be confident in your decisions and your ability. The cats of the clan will be watching what type of leader you will be, and a falter in yourself could impact everything" pain shot through me, but it felt lifting almost. As if I could feel my confidence build and make me feel prouder in myself. Skyleaf fell into ranks with the other cats and then the next cat came forward. Sparrowscar had a twinkle in his eye I hadn't seen since I was a kit. He lost it when Spottedsnow died. It made me happy to see him have that same spark back.

"I know I was never the cat you deserved for as a father-"

"Who could ask for a better one?" I grinned up at him and purred softly. He smiled back and rested his nose on my forehead.

"With this life, I give the gift of boldness. Be willing to take risks even if it could back fire. Show that courage I know you have to aid Thunderclan and to stand up against those who wish to harm those you care for. Take up the challenge and face it head strong son!" A searing burning pain went through me, making me feel stronger and weaker at the same time. It was the most powerful pain compared to the others. I gasped as Sparrowscar stepped back. I took a few gasping breaths before seeing who the next cat was. Foxhop was up next and I couldn't help but laugh a little as he looked at proudly.

He might be a big goofball, but here he is cheering me on and being proud like an older littermate. I have missed him.

"I hope you didn't think I wouldn't give you a life" he said playfully.

"You would be so proud if your kits Foxhop" I said with soft grin.

"I am, I am also proud of Sagelight for pushing past her grief to raise them" He smiled to himself. "And I know Screechpaw is becoming a great Warrior because of you" he added. I bent forward as he placed his nose on my forehead. "With this life, I give you the gift of family. Family doesn't just mean the ones related to you by blood. It's the cats you surround yourself with everyday. Your mate and your friends love you like family and you love them too, remember that". This wasn't painful, it was fluttering with calming warmth. It felt similar to the feeling I had when I met Rushfire for the first time, when I went to the gathering and met most of my friends, when Mapleclaw and I went on our first patrol as warriors, when I taught Slatefoot how to hunt. I could feel the love I had for them crash over me, making me feel as if I am home right now. Foxhop smiled at me when I opened my eyes and felt the same sensation looking at him. Foxhop joined the other cats again and next came Coldheart, the cranky old medicine cat I looked up to for some reason. He wasn't star covered like the other though.

Is he not a Starclan cat?

"Look here, you are moving up" Coldheart snarled. Even if it sounded harsh I know he meant well.

"Coldheart are you-"

"No, I am not a Starclan cat. I am a grey warrior" he interrupted.

Pineclaw mentioned them...

"I know I don't show it enough but I just wanna say that I always saw you and Moonwater as my own kits, even if we weren't related by blood. Like Foxhop said you were the family I surrounded myself with. No offense Wishstar!" He called back smirking at his mother. I couldn't really see Wishstar's reaction from in front of Coldheart, but I bet his mother wasn't too happy. Coldheart turned back to me and gave me that rare, sincere smile. He rested his nose on my forehead. "With this life, I give you the gift of fidelity. Believe in your morales and your cause, your beliefs are what makes up a part of who you are. Don't let that faith waiver even for a moment. May it be your faith in Starclan's plan or your heart, it is still belief". He gave me one more confident smirk as the pain scorched into me, going deep inside and piercing my heart. I felt myself sway a little but kept myself standing. Last to come forward was Wishstar, the leader I was raised under the gaze of. She was always watching me grow, and she gave me aid just as much as Skyleaf.

I hope I can keep upright with this last life, I don't know how much longer I can stand.

"I was proud to have seen the cat you had become when I was alive, and yet I grow prouder every day afterwards while I watched from up here in Starclan" she studied me with same love as that of a queen for her kit. The same look Spottedsnow still gives me. I really didn't have anything to say so Wishstar laid her nose on my forehead. "With this life, I give you the gift of leadership and duty. You once said to me that you never had any interest in leading, yet you were deputy for two different leaders and now you are here becoming leader of Thunderclan. You did because of a sense of duty. Use that instinct that guided you to this moment and become a great leader of Thunderclan". The last life shook me violently as it went through my body in fierce, painful waves. I wanted to collapse by now but stood strong. I heaved as I waited for the pain to subside before looking up at the cats who came to give me lives.

"Thank you, thank you all" I cried a little. Wishstar smiled with a sadden look in her eye.

"I hail you by your new name, Puddlestar. Your old life is no more. You have now received the nine lives of a leader, and StarClan grants you the guardianship of Thunderclan. Defend it well; care for young and old; honor your ancestors and the traditions of the warrior code; live each life with pride and dignity."

"Puddlestar! Puddlestar! Puddlestar!" My friends and family cheered. I could feel tears fall down my checks as I watched them fade away.

"I love you! You love you all! I promise to honor you all each and every day!" I woke up with a startle. I quickly got my bearings around that I was back at the edge of the moonpool. Moonwater smiled proudly at me before getting up. *I am leader of Thunderclan now... I am now called Puddlestar... I am Puddlestar of Thunderclan!*

Final Alligances

ThunderClan

Leader
Puddlestar - a strong brown and grey tabby tom with one blue eye one green eye
Apprentice, Screechpaw

Deputy
Darkcloud - a lean black and white tom with dark yellow eyes

Medicine Cat
Moonwater - a dark grey tabby she-cat with dark blue eyes

Warriors
Whiteleaf - a white she-cat with dark green eyes and a large, fluffy tail
Apprentice, Eaglepaw
Smokefoot - a dark grey tabby tom with darker grey paws and dark orange eyes
Iceeye - a dark grey and white tabby tom with ice blue eyes
Silverfeather - a white, silver, and dark grey tabby she-cat with purplish blue eyes
Branchtail - a dark brown tabby tom with dark green eyes
Sagelight - a muscular dark brown tabby she-cat with a fluffy mane, tail, light brown belly, and bright orangish yellow eyes
Rushfire - a ginger and red tabby tom with bright green eyes
Apprentice, Beepaw
Slatefoot - a blue tom with light grey paws and ice blue eyes
Coppernose - a black tom with a white muzzle and bright orange eyes
Springtail - a light grey speckled she-cat with dark green eyes
Mothdust - a grey fluffy chested tabby she-cat with brown belly, legs, and green eyes
Apprentice, Ashenpaw
Forestfrost - a white and silver tabby she-cat with bright green eyes
Fireash - a white and ginger tabby tom with dark grey tail and

purple eyes
Flutterbird - a grey and pale ginger tabby she-cat with blue eyes and round ears
Blizzardskip - a white and blue splotched tabby tom with green eyes
Jaggedtail - a spiky black tom with a large tail and yellow eyes
Flickerleaf - a dark red tabby tom with white belly, paws, and bright blue eyes
Smaugclaw - a light red tabby tom with golden eyes
Indigocloud - a light grey and white tabby she-cat with light purple eyes
Lemonpelt - a golden tabby she-cat with white belly, mane, paws, and dark orange eyes.

Apprentices
Eaglepaw - a dark ginger tabby tom with two white paws, two dark colored paws, and bright yellow eyes.
Ashenpaw - a silver dappled she-cat with fluffy ears and hazel eyes
Screechpaw - a fluffy light brown tabby she-cat with bright orange eyes
Beepaw - a orange and yellow tabby tom with very dark tabby stripes and lemon green eyes

Queens
Applebrook - a cream and white fluffy tom with three white paws and amber eyes. Missing left leg and right eye (Flashkit, Sapkit, and Eveningkit)
Orchidfrost - an almost all white she-cat except for the calico tail, face, and dark brown eyes (Heatkit and Elmkit)
Nightrain - a dark grey speckled she-cat with aquamarine eyes (Spiderkit and Emberkit)

Elders
Ravenclaw - a large fluffy black tom with hazel eyes and long whiskers

Kits
Heatkit - a red tabby she-cat with a dark grey face, paws, and yellow eyes
Elmkit- a brown and white tabby tom with bright brown eyes
Flashkit - a ginger speckled and tabby tom with with blue eyes
Sapkit - a long legged cream tabby tom with amber eyes

Eveningkit - a gray she-cat with white splotches and purple blue eyes
Spiderkit - a very dark gray tabby tom with aquamarine eyes
Emberkit - a black and golden speckled she-cat with orange eyes

ShadowClan

Leader
Tinystar - a tiny grey tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

Deputy
Troutscale - a small dark grey dapple she-cat with bright yellow eyes

Medicine Cat
Sootfall - a stocky, dark grey tabby tom with bright amber eyes

Warriors
Sorrelscar - a dark golden fluffy, tabby tom with pale hazel eyes and a scratched up muzzle
Oakface - a white, heavily built tom with broken face markings and dark yellow eyes
Yarrowpad - a dark yellow tabby tom with a fluffy tail and light brown eyes
Apprentice, Pouncepaw
Lynxfur - a golden leopard tom with bright blue eyes
Swanfeather - a thin, white fluffy she-cat with dark green eyes
Cloverstem - a slightly fluffy, solid grey tom with dark green eyes
Sprucepounce - a velvety brown tabby tom with bright blue eyes
Badgerfur - a black and white tom with bright brown eyes
Cedarlight - a brown tortoiseshell tom with dark green eyed
Sunsong - a dark golden tabby tom with light blue eyes
Shinystone - a blueish silver and white tabby she-cat with black paws and dark green eyes
Snowrush - an all white fluffy tom with blue eyes (he is deaf)

Apprentices
Pouncepaw - a white and red tortoiseshell she-cat with dark grey eyes

Queens

Doveshade - a fluffy brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes
Lynxfur - a golden leopard tom with bright blue eyes (Batkit, Lightkit, and Acornkit)
Blossomtail - a golden tortoiseshell she-cat with white speckled tail and dull amber eyes
Morningwhisker - a light grey and bright golden tabby she-cat with green eyes

Elders
Flamefall - a lean orange tabby tom with bright yellow eyes. (Former Leader)
Tallstem - a long legged golden tabby she-cat with dark orange eyes
Ryestep - a dark brown stocky tom with darker brown paws and dark orange eyes

Kits
Batkit - a black fluffy tom with large ears, smokey mane, and yellow eyes
Lightkit - a white and golden dapple tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes
Acornkit - a grey leopard she-cat with green eyes

WindClan

Leader
Birchstar - a muscular brownish ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with bright hazel eyes

Deputy
Ferretflight - a brown tabby tom with white paws and dark green eyes

Medicine Cat
Daisyeyes - a small, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes
Fennelsnap - a light brown tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes

Warriors
Fernmist - a fluffy, dark grey tabby she-cat with pretty green eyes. Paralyzed from waist and down.

Hayheart - a thin golden she-cat with bright orange eyes
Thrushfeather - a dull brown tabby tom with pale blue eyes
Mudstripe - a dark brown tabby tom with aquamarine eyes
Swiftwater - a grey tom with dark green eyes, white chest, and two light grey paws
Leafbloom - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with yellow eyes
Rustfur - a dull ginger tabby tom with grayish blue eyes
Horsepelt - a light brown tom with one white paw and bright orange eyes
Heronwing - a light brown tabby tom with grey eyes
Archshore - a dark ginger and white tabby she-cat with amber eyes
Rowansprint - a dull red and ginger tom with grey eyes
Shadydapple - a orange and black tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Featherpaw
Cricketsong - a black and orange tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes
Apprentice, Splashpaw
Cavestep - a tiny grey and white tabby tom with amber eyes
Sunnypelt - a ginger and white tabby tom with green eyes
Cloudyheart - a ginger and blue calico tom with orange eyes
Rainytail - a blue and white splotched she-cat with purple eyes

Apprentices
Featherpaw - a dark grey tabby tom with dark green eyes
Splashpaw - a golden tabby tortoiseshell she-cat with dark brown eyes

Queens
Aspenskip - a muscular and fluffy black she-cat with pretty brown eyes
Roseflare - a fluffy, ginger tortoiseshell she-cat with orange eyes
Flowerbreeze - a white thin she-cat with orange splotches and yellow eyes (Hailkit and Otterkit)

Elders
Spekflight - a dark orange solid she-cat with dark orange eyes and white spek on her chest

Kits
Hailkit - a dark grey tabby she-cat with orange eyes

Otterkit - a white and light brown tom with mint green eyes

Riverclan

Leader
Briarstar - a lean, black and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with hazel eyes

Deputy
Shortlake - a silver tom with dark blueish grey eyes and a stumpy tail
Apprentice, Dapplepaw

Medicine Cat
Ravennest - a black tortoiseshell she-cat with brown eyes

Warriors
Flailbelly - a large, fluffy sliver speckled tom with white belly, chest, and bright amber eyes.
Mossyflower - a fluffy blue she-cat with darker blue splotches and aquamarine eyes
Scorchfire - a black, white, and ginger patched tom with bright orange eyes and a fluffy tail
Clifffern - an orangish brown tabby tom with green eyes
Gorsefern - a golden she-cat with white chest, belly, ears, muzzle, and hazel eyes
Redleap - a dark red stocky tom with orange eyes, white chest, belly, and tipped tail
Swampsong - a cream tom with brown points and amber eyes
Reedbee - a silverish blue tabby she-cat with minty green eyes
Boulderstep - a dark blue stocky tom with lighter blue splotches and blue eyes
Willowheart - a silver fluffy tom with white ears, paw, muzzle, and dark green eyes
Thicketshade - a black and brown tortoiseshell she-cat with bright amber eyes
Crowflight - a dark grey fluffy tom with brown eyes
Raindapple - a light blue speckled tom with amber eyes and a fluffy tail
Wetpatch - a small, stocky, white and dark grey tabby she-cat with aquamarine eyes

Apprentice, Tigerpaw
Blueshine - a black and orange tabby tortoiseshell she-cat with orange eyes
Lichentrail - a cream tom with brown points and grey eyes
Ripplenose - a brown tortoiseshell she-cat with amber eyes
Hawkbelly - a dark red tabby she-cat with white paws and amber eyes
Redbird - a thin red and white she-cat with yellow eyes and bright pink nose

Apprentices
Tigerpaw - a dark brown tabby tom with a creamy white mane, tail, belly, and dark yellow eyes
Dapplepaw - a dark grey and white dapple she-cat with orange eyes

Queens
Tornpelt - a grey and white tabby she-cat with bright yellow eyes (Cinderkit and Whitekit)

Elders
Plumfeather - a fluffy golden tabby she-cat with bright green eyes

Kits
Cinderkit - a dark grey tabby she-cat with bright green eyes
Whitekit - a large white fluffy tom with yellow eyes

SkyClan

Leader
Whitestar - a black fluffy tom with white paws, ears, tipped tail, and orange eyes

Deputy
Patchfur - a dark ginger and white tortoiseshell she-cat with dull orange eyes

Medicine Cat
Beechjaw - a large fluffy dark yellow tom with white paws, darker yellow jaw, ears, and orange eyes
Brookwish - a dark grey tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Warriors
Leafybush - a fluffy brown tabby tom with white chest, belly, paws, muzzle, and dull aquamarine eyes
Apprentice, Kestrelpaw
Sorrelfall - a grey tabby tom with green eyes
Brindlepelt - a lean brown tabby she-cat with dark green eyes
Lakemask - a ginger and silver calico she-cat with bright aquamarine eyes
Pearlstreak - a grey and white patched she-cat with a grey streak and bright yellow eyes
Songheart - a dark grey she-cat with a black paw, black tipped tail, and dark blue eyes
Apprentice, Talonpaw
Rubblebounce - a blue dapple fluffy tom with orangish yellow eyes
Curlybranch - a large fluffy brown tabby tom with lime green eyes
Apprentice, Larkpaw
Elkleap - a ginger and grey tabby tom with dark blueish grey eyes
Apprentice, Pigeonpaw
Swoopowl- a stocky, large, fluffy white tom with black speckle and bright orange eyes. (Former Loner)
Wrenstrike- a large, fluffy, full brown tabby she-cat with ice blue eyes and a long tail (Former loner)
Snowynose - a dark blue tabby she-cat with grey eyes and a silver muzzle
Wingpatch - a white tom with an orange splotch and lemon green eyes
Peakear - a black and grey tom with blue eyes and a fluffy tail
Honeyflower - a golden calico she-cat with aquamarine eyes
Mousepelt - a dark brown tom with grey eyes
Lilysight - a fluffy silver tabby she-cat with orangish red eyes

Apprentices
Kestrelpaw - a reddish brown and white tabby tom with ice blue eyes and grey paws
Larkpaw - a dark brown tabby tom with a white muzzle, belly, tail, and yellow eyes.
Talonpaw - a black she-cat with white belly, mane, and bright orange eyes
Pigeonpaw - a dull brown speckled she-cat with green eyes and white mane

Queens
Nettlewhisker - a stocky, brown and white tabby she-cat with yellow eyes (Oakkit, Stonekit, and Poppykit)

Elders
Weedfoot - a golden tabby tom with bright green eyes
Ashbreeze - a large fluffy smokey grey tom with bright orange eyes

Kits
Oakkit - a fluffy brown tabby tom with yellow eyes
Stonekit - a light grey and white she-cat with dark grey points and with green eyes
Poppykit - a red tabby she-cat with lime green eyes

Loners and Kittypets

Fitz - a small brown tabby tom with yellow eyes
Cody - a fluffy black tom with a missing right foot and green eyes
Talon - A ginger and white tabby she-cat with grey paws and blue eyes